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A Private Affair

Kathy Clark

"You taste like springtime. I've been waiting the whole winter of my life to find you."

He traced the full outline of her lips. Interpreting her moan of pleasure, he released her so his own hands would be free to thread through the thickness of her hair, gently tilting her head back and pulling her body closer against his at the same time.

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Kathy Clark

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Kathryn Falk, *Lady Barrow*

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CHAPTER ONE

It was no easy task keeping a firm grip on the large slippery brass urn filled with crushed ice and a bottle of semi-cheap champagne with one numbed arm while the other hand skillfully picked the lock of a suite at one of San Francisco's finest hotels. Even more difficult was appearing unsuspicious to any passing observers.

Cautiously Kelly McClain glanced up and down the empty hallway. Unless they looked closely enough to notice that she was not using a key, it was highly unlikely that anyone would suspect her of criminal intentions. It was not unusual for a hotel employee to be making a delivery to a guest even at this late hour, and Kelly's extremely short full skirt and dangerously low-necked peasant blouse obligingly marked her as one of the club's waitresses. That was one job she would never use as a reference on future employment applications, but for now it was serving her purpose, which was to gain entry to Room 632.

At last the lock cooperated with a releasing click,

and Kelly, with one last survey for witnesses, slipped into the room, easing the door shut behind her. It took several seconds for her keen greenish-gold eyes to grow accustomed to the darkness in the small entry hall, but she had done her homework well by memorizing the floor plan of this suite so that she knew exactly where she was and where she wanted to go next. She took several deep, calming breaths, hoping to quiet her pounding heart that surely must have been audible to everyone on the sixth floor. It wasn't that she was nervous because of what she had just done but because of what she was expecting to find now that she was in Room 632. This was the crucial point of her whole visit to San Francisco, and this was the reason she had taken the waitressing job and was dressed in an outfit that would have made a stripper blush. The sooner she did what she had come to do, the sooner she would be able to return to her life in Los Angeles.

Actually, breaking and entering was not how Kelly preferred to handle her business. But it was her last resort. She had been following her target around for the last three days, hoping to satisfactorily complete her assignment without popping in on him like this, but even though he had been totally unaware of her intentions, he had not cooperated at all with her plans. So now, on the last night of the convention, she had been forced to activate Plan G, having tried and failed at Plans A through F.

Resolutely she shifted the heavy, frigid urn. Very cold, wet drops of moisture ran down its polished sides before trickling along her bare arm and drip-

p ng off her elbow Perhaps she should have thought of a different diversionary offering, but working in the bar had made this the log cal gi for her to de l ver to the unsuspecting guests And if the champagne was as thoroughly ch ed as her arm, Kelly was counting on the occupants of this suite to be pac fied enough to overlook her intrusion at least long enough for her to make her getaway with what she had come for

It wasn t that she really cared if these people were disturbed or not On the contrary she hoped to completely ruin the r even ng But she didn t want to get caught doing it At least, not until she had something substantial to show for it

Once mo re she checked the tiny camera to make sure it was positioned correctly The miniature ens was camouflaged within what appeared to be an elaborate ring that she was wearing on the ring finger of her left hand The body of the camera was concealed in the pa m of her hand with a shutter mechanism that triggered automatically when she squeezed her hand into a fist Its convenient design allowed for accurate, candid photographs with out arousing untimely suspicion and alarm The reper cussions would come later after the film had been developed and Kelly was miles away

She stepped out of the relative safety of the entry area and into the darkened living room Pausing only long enough to determine that she was alone in the room, she moved toward the bedroom where she expected to find her prey The thick, expensive car pet muffled the sounds of her footsteps as she head-

ed purposefully toward the small shaft of light escaping around the edges of the door that had been left slightly ajar

"They certainly didn't waste any time on the more artful amenities of romance did they?" she mused to herself It hadn't been fifteen minutes since the man and his 'date' had left the club and already they were in the bedroom or from the sound of it, in the shower together going God knows what What animals Kelly shook her head in disgust

This assignment had been distasteful from the start and now she was going to meet, face-to-face the cheating louse whose wife had hired Kelly to get incriminating photographs that might bring the man to his senses so he could change his ways before he lost his lovely family Whatever the results, Kelly's appointed task was just beyond the door and it was time for her to get it over with as painlessly as possible

Gently she eased the door open her left hand tightening around the camera in preparation for whatever sight would meet her A king size bed dominated the room, but it showed no signs of recent use The blue velvet spread had been folded invitingly back to reveal two plump, uncreased whitecased pillows A pair of tan slacks were tossed carelessly across the foot of the bed and two dark brown shoes peeked out from beneath the spread's edge A trail of abandoned socks, a crumpled shirt and brief hot pink jockey shorts led the way to the bathroom where the sounds of spraying water and a passable male baritone gurgling "As Time Goes By"

told her that the unsuspecting couple were still enjoying their shower.

Kelly couldn't suppress a grimace of repulsion. It was going to take more than a degree in criminology and many years of on-the-job experience before she would be able to witness a bedroom scene with any amount of detachment, much less a bathroom orgy. She was beginning to feel more than a little nauseous, probably from a bad case of nerves that was getting worse by the second. Her job would have been a lot quicker and easier if the errant couple had been in bed where they were supposed to be, instead of in the shower like two depraved ducks!

She just couldn't force herself to confront them in the bathroom. She had heard about the bizarre things some couples did in showers, and for a woman who had rarely shared her bathroom with anyone for reasons more personal than brushing her teeth, this was above and beyond the call of duty. She decided not to crowd the small private room any more than it already was.

Instead her gaze continued to sweep the room, efficiently cataloging its contents. Her eyes touched on the open suitcase that sat partially unpacked on the luggage rack, on a massive provincial dresser whose top was littered with the assorted contents of the man's pockets, and on a television set that was either showing an old black-and-white movie or needed to have the color adjusted.

But something about her observation began to bother her. There seemed to be a glaring absence of

feminine apparel. Had the woman been so overwhelmed with the man's charms that she hadn't even taken time to undress before taking the plunge? As Kelly's fertile mind expanded on this theory, the sound of running water in the shower stopped, and several minutes later one member of her dedicated surveillance opened the door and stepped out of the bathroom.

A large fluffy bath towel covered his head completely, hiding his face as he briskly rubbed his hair. Kelly's shocked, but interested, gaze was automatically drawn lower as she admired a pair of broad, well-muscled shoulders and a brawny chest liberally dusted with dark brown hair that formed a slender line down the middle of his flat abdomen before it spread once again around the intimate masculine area that was only partially revealed by the tightening, vigorous drying of the towel's ends. Only the teasing points of the oversize cloth as they dipped and weaved made an attempt to hide any part of the man's magnificently nude anatomy as he continued drying his hair, temporarily unaware that he had an audience. Kelly watched with the perverse fascination of a snake charmer studying a deadly cobra as the towel twitched back and forth, never fully exposing the man's charms but giving every promise that it could happen at any moment.

"Who the hell are you, and what are you doing in my room?" a deep voice thundered, causing Kelly's hazel eyes to immediately snap up to the now uncovered face. A rosy flush of embarrassment stained her cheeks as she struggled to regain her

temporarily misplaced power of speech

Although she had seen a small photograph of Adam Davis before leaving Los Angeles and had been following him at a discreet distance for the last three days trying to monitor his every move she had never really gotten a close look at his face until now and the experience was more pleasant than Kelly had expected No wonder this man could pick and choose the women he wanted to spend time with and why his faithful wife had painfully begged Kelly to bring back enough evidence so she could have a handle with which to hold on to her man and her marriage could indeed be saved Kelly's own heart was doing uncharacteristic flip-flops as she watched the interesting play of emotions cross and change the angles and planes that made up one of the most handsome faces she had ever had the displeasure to see

"I'm a hostess from the club sir" Kelly answered fighting an inward battle with herself to remember the reason she was in this man's hotel room She had never felt this incredibly powerful magnetism toward any man during all of her twenty six years but apparently she wasn't the only woman afflicted with this strange disease His womanizing was after all, the very root of the problem she had been hired to document Maybe if he would leave some of his charm at home he wouldn't be tempted to spread it around so liberally Courageously she matched him stare for stare "The hotel has sent you this complimentary bottle of champagne" She spoke with renewed calm as her deceptively honest expression masked the disgust she felt for this two-timer this

scam who could so casually cheat on his lovely wife. She sincerely hoped that he and his date choked on it later.

"Don't you think it's a little late for deliveries?" he asked suspiciously as he glanced at the hands on his travel alarm clock. Nonchalantly, as if it were not at all unusual for a strange woman to witness his nude body after a shower, he slid the towel down and wrapped it securely around his waist. Oddly enough, his unsettling blue eyes had so captured her own eyes that they had not strayed from his face since he had spoken. Hearing no response from her, he continued. "Not to mention the fact that I'm leaving early in the morning and won't have an opportunity to properly enjoy this champagne." He stepped close enough to read the label. "The Dodgers didn't do badly that year, but I'm afraid it wasn't a prime one for wine," he commented wryly before demanding, "Why didn't the hotel send me this gift when I first arrived?"

He was standing so close to her that the tangy, clean smell of him assaulted her already vulnerable senses. "This week we've been very busy with four conventions." She blurted out her preplanned explanation. "But as soon as we discovered our oversight, I was sent up here with your champagne and an apology from the management."

"Which still doesn't explain how you got through a locked door and into my bedroom."

"I knocked several times, but you must have still been in the shower and couldn't hear me," she lied without hesitation. This was the sort of reaction she

had been expecting so her answers were ready "I didn't think anyone was here, so I let myself in with my master key I was just going to put this on your dresser, then leave."

After he had listened to her explanation he studied her silently for several minutes. his head tilted slightly to one side Long well-shaped fingers combed through his thick hair which was almost black from its glossy wetness. Kelly watched. bewitched as the expression in his light blue eyes changed from hostility to amused curiosity They slowly and thoroughly raked her scantily clad figure, caressing each of her long bare limbs After several nerve-racking moments. his lips curved into a captivating smile revealing a deep masculine dimple carved into each cheek

"It was Mark, right?" he guessed

"Mark what?" she asked, perplexed by this new line of questioning

"I should have known you were an actress That was really good" He chuckled as he congratulated her "As you already know, it isn't 'Mark what. but Mark who, as in Mark Cameron He sent you here as a joke didn't he?" He took another step toward her

Kelly had played "chicken" and won against the best of them but this time she found herself retreating as quickly as he was advancing "I don't know anyone named Mark Cameron and haven't the faintest idea what you are talking about" She stalled as she felt the curved edge of the dresser bite into her buttocks effectively halting her escape

"The game is over, so you might as well tell me the truth. Mark and I have been having this sort of contest since high school." His voice was hypnotically smooth as he continued what he felt was an unnecessary explanation. "We are always trying to best each other's practical jokes, and I guess he felt like he owed me one." His hands reached out, took the forgotten item from her weak grasp, and set it down on the dresser top. "I have to admit that at least this time his taste has improved. But maybe I shouldn't send back his little surprise without checking it out completely. The gift wrapping is very, very nice." His voice had deepened to a husky whisper as his index finger lightly traced the gathered edge of her plunging neckline.

Although he had barely brushed the soft hills of her bosom, a tingle of excitement raced wildly through Kelly, starting at the invisible line of his touch and spreading downward. He was much too close to her now, his height towering over her, making her five-foot six inch frame seem short in comparison. Her mouth was open to protest, but oddly no words came out. A small noise that sounded curiously like a sigh escaped her lips just seconds before his dark head bent and his mouth captured hers, demanding full surrender. All coherent thoughts fled her befuddled brain as a wild, indescribable pain soared through her body, settling in a dull ache in the most improbable places. The staccato roar of her heart pounded in her ears as his mouth continued its sensual assault, leaving her moist lips eager for more.

One large hand supported the back of her neck as his fingers spread into the silky depths of her sienna-brown hair which tumbled in long loose curls well past her shoulders. While his other hand roamed in lazy circles around her back, leaving heated trails along her sensitive skin through the thin material of her blouse.

How far did Mark pay you to get Erin willing to up the ante? He was so casual, so flippant. The one thing I would never want to punch with you is pennies. He breathed into her ear and although she could tell he was teasing her the insulting words took on a different meaning as his warm

Kelly ducked away, trying to escape before his kisses completely clouded her sense of responsibility and morality, but his unyielding arms effectively held her against him. She leaned as far back as possible, scrambling for freedom. Her searching hand closed around the neck of the borrowed chilled bottle of champagne and for a fleeting moment she entertained the thought of christening his dark head, but the unexpected urge to make love to him rather than wound him frightened her and she tried even more frantically to get away. "Come on

"Here," she gasped, thrusting the frosty bottle against his untouched abdomen. "Have some champagne and cool off, Asher."

His shocked body automatically arched away from her as soon as the bottle touched his flesh, and his hands released their hold on her in a reflex to catch the champagne before it hit the floor. His weary mind left him an audience whose applause

could only sputter his surprise.

Kelly took advantage of his discomfort and sprinted for the door. However, she couldn't resist one last parting shot. "You can forget the tip. This one's on me."

The hallway was already empty by the time he recovered enough to get to the door. His lack of dress prevented him from leaving his room, and logically he knew that there was no reason he should try to follow her anyway. Mark had gotten his revenge, after all.

Several minutes later, Kelly leaned against her locked door, idly rubbing the feeling back into her numb arm while she tried to catch her breath and sort out the puzzling events of tonight's adventure. It had been a complete fiasco. Not only had she not taken any incriminating pictures or even seen any evidence that he had a woman in his room with him, but she had succumbed to his undeniably irresistible charm with all the finesse of a schoolgirl on her first date!

Her boss was not going to like this one bit. He had sent her out on what should have been a routine observation assignment, and she had bungled it badly. He was sure to recite his favorite theory about the futility of sending a woman to spy on a Romeo, and as much as she hated to hear the charge, in this instance perhaps he would be right.

Kelly never gave any thought to the names of her prey because once she thought of them by a name they became real, living breathing people instead of just impersonal projects that she was working on.

She had to harden her heart and remember whose side she was supposed to be on, so it was easier if she kept a mental distance at all times. Tonight she had violated that important rule.

The man, Adam Davis, was no longer a one-dimensional character, and even though she had only been with him for a very short time, his name wouldn't be one she'd soon forget. For just that brief moment time had stood still, and she had wanted more than he had given her, much more than she even should have thought about, considering the fact that she had been following him to document his romances, not to become one of them.

With a snort of disgust with herself and her eccentric emotions, she decided not to take the chance of running into Mr. Davis tomorrow but to go back to Los Angeles immediately. A quick telephone call changed her airline reservations, and a jotted note to the hotel manager explaining that she had to leave her job suddenly owing to an unexpected emergency back home tied up all the loose ends of her week-long stay in San Francisco. She had only to change clothes, pack her bag, and make it to the airport in time for the two A.M. shuttle flight.

With a surge of energy, Kelly tossed her empty suitcase onto the bed. Carefully removing the tiny camera, she packed it in its case and tucked it into one of the side compartments. Selecting a neat but comfortable pair of slacks and matching knit blouse, she started to undress.

As she tossed her uniform onto the bed she couldn't ignore her feelings of revulsion at the im-

modest image of herself in the waiting room. Of course she had worn less in public when she went swimming or even when she wore short shorts to the beach but this suggestive outfit was provocative in the extreme. The ruffled satin-edged panties that lasted mere inches from her bent knees and the full black velvet skirt practically invited the attentions of playful adventurers. There was something definitely demoralizing about parading her undressed body in front of a group of leering men. This outfit had been designed to show a woman's body to its best advantage.

With a last look at her small room, which in no way resembled Mr. Dix's expensive suite, he left San Francisco not in a blaze of glory but in a shroud of defeat.

Later on the flight home, her sex recrimination began to change to anger. How dare he ruin a perfectly planned operation and cause her to look like a complete fool. With a reputation like his, it should have been easy to catch him with another woman, but even though Kelly had watched him as closely as her cover allowed, she had been unable to prove that he had been unfaithful to his wife. Of course that didn't mean that he hadn't been, goodness knows the man had nerves of steel. How else could he have had the unmitigated gall to romance her a total stranger while another woman lingered in his bathroom waiting her turn?

But as her heated senses slowly returned to normal, she began to clinically catalog the night's events. The more she replayed the scene, the more

questions her logical mind began throwing back at her. Even though she had seen them leave the bar together, all evidence pointed toward the possibility that the only woman in Adam's room at that moment had been Kelly. Her trained eyes had detected no tell-tale feminine signs at all, either in the bedroom or in the brief glimpse of the bathroom she had seen through the door he had left open. Maybe Kelly had arrived too early. Even though it had been well past the shank of the evening, perhaps they had arranged to meet later, thus covering their tracks. And she had fallen for that trick like a greenhorn.

For the rest of the short flight she alternately berated her stupidity and felt very sorry for Adam's beautiful heart-stolen wife. Kelly remembered clearly the photograph Vicki Davis had shown her. Taken the previous Christmas, it had shown a model family standing in front of a huge, perfectly decorated tree. They had certainly looked happy with wide, affectionate smiles adorning their faces. Vicki's platinum-blond head had been level with his strong square chin as they posed with their two adorable children. Adam held little Amy in one arm while his other arm draped lovingly around Vicki's shoulders. Vicki had been holding the baby, Jason, who had obviously been too young to appreciate the importance of smiling at the camera as, instead, he'd been concentrating on trying to stick his tiny finger in Adam's eye. It had appeared to be such a cozy scene, but since Kelly had been filled in on all the sordid details, she was all too aware of its fuzziness.

During her visit to Kelly's office Vicki had made

no secret of the fact that she was very wealthy and was willing to do whatever it took to show proof of her loving marriage regardless of the cost. She had seemed to be a really nice, sincere person and Kelly had liked her immediately. She had wanted to help save this marriage but had performed miserably. Now because of her sloppiness, Vicki would be hurt. And the children would suffer too.

If only Kelly had been able to help this family stay together.

If only Adam Davis wasn't such an insensitive philanderer.

If only Kelly's breath didn't catch in her throat every time she remembered the intoxicating feel of his lips on hers!

CHAPTER TWO

Los Angeles could accurately be described as a city that never slept or even slowed down long enough for a nap. Because it was dominated by the entertainment industry, which traditionally had difficulty distinguishing between day and night, L.A. never shut its eyes to the wide variety of endless activities always going on.

Exhausted and depressed, Kelly barely noticed the predawn hubbub or the spectacular beauty of the sun beginning its climb from behind the pointed peaks of the San Gabriel Mountains. Born and raised in a small, lazy town in southern Arizona, a town whose population had never exceeded a thousand even on bargain days at the Siesta Supermarket, Kelly had immediately fallen in love with the constant hustle and bustle of L.A. She felt the disadvantages of smog, traffic, and the occasional earth tremors that had prompted her to replace all her cracked china with break-resistant Corelle Ware were far outweighed by the advantages. Los Angeles was a vibrant, beautiful city nestled conveniently be-

tween the mountains and the ocean. There was a sense of freedom and an eclectic blend of relaxed frenzy that gave it a personality all its own. And the city's population was as wild and exotic as its scenery.

Kelly had always enjoyed watching people, studying them, and trying to figure out what made them live their lives the way they did. After only a few hours in L.A. she decided there could be no better place on earth for character studies because there was certainly no shortage of bizarre but interesting characters. That was probably the main reason she had not chosen a safe sane boring apartment but instead had rented a lavender stucco garage apartment on the second floor of a decidedly dazzling cottage. As if the paint job hadn't been vivid enough, its exterior was made even more colorful by the profusion of scarlet bougainvillaea and lavender wisteria dripping with heavy purple blooms, and bright blue-dotted morning glory vines all entwined in an intricate floral tapestry that climbed the walls and hung from the eaves. The owner of this enchanting eccentricity was equally fascinating, with her photographic memory and engrossing recital of her sixty-five years in show business.

Absently Kelly paid her cab fare and carried her suitcase up the narrow flower-lined driveway without paying attention to the olfaction attacking fragrances or the velvet soft stroking of numerous black cats arching against her slim ankles and brushing between her legs. Alice Lily, her landlady, had a countersuperstitious passion for collecting black cats.

whose numbers seemed to multiple almost weekly. It wasn't that her many cats did what cats do best, which was the mass production of kittens, because Alice took very good care of her "children," spending a small fortune on vet bills for spays and neutering. Rather, Alice made regular visits to the local animal shelters, adopting any strays that touched her generous heart, but they always, without exception, were sold back in color. Alice's reasoning was that since there were local laws concerning the number of cats allowed to one owner, if anyone ever tried to prove that she had exceeded that number by counting her beloved felines, she could always reply that they must have made a mistake by counting several cats twice. Odds were that it would indeed be difficult to prove the actual number, since the animals did look very similar and rarely were all seen together in one spot at any one moment. And Kelly, after three years of stepping over sleeping cats or disposing of gifts of dead rodents or lizards, could now easily navigate a surefooted course through the friendly black maze that greeted her.

Careful not to let in any purring pets, she slipped quickly into her apartment. A brisk shower did little to revive her, so, after deciding she deserved the day off and wanting to delay the inevitably reproachful interview with her boss, she changed the tape on her answering machine and fell into bed.

It was after noon when Kelly awoke, and it took her another couple of hours to reassure her lonely plants that she had not abandoned them and to try to lift her own sagging spirits. Unusually restless, she

decided that she might as well go to the office and get started on the volumes of paperwork that always followed the conclusion of a business trip, successful or not. She knew her boss, Jack Casey, would have a few comments on her failure as soon as he found out, and as little as she wanted to hear them, she figured she might as well get it over with now so she could dismiss this disturbing incident from her mind completely. Although she lived only a dozen or so blocks from the office, it took almost fifteen minutes to maneuver her new, but intentionally nondescript, Ford through the traffic and pedestrians. It was actually quicker to jog to work, which she often did, but today Kelly felt amazingly tired. She just couldn't get last night's confrontation off her mind, and the thoughts that persisted were images of an exceedingly attractive man, thoughts not at all businesslike. She had no doubt that if Jack had handled the case instead of her, not only would he have gotten the pictures, but also he would have already dismissed Adam Davis from his memory. Unfortunately, Kelly had had no success at either.

She didn't know whether to feel relieved or annoyed when she entered the empty office and found a note from her boss telling her that he was out on a case and would see her first thing in the morning. Her explanations and any recriminations would just have to wait another day. For now there was a blank expense report lying on her desk and a small pile of mail and messages to sort through, so she sat down and flipped on her gooseneck desk lamp. The mail was junk, and the messages were unimportant

soon she was digging through her purse searching for the receipts from her trip

An hour later she wearily pressed her fingertips against her throbbing temples Tedious paperwork had never been her favorite pastime and when she realized that she had left a couple of receipts at home she jumped on the excuse for putting this chore off too Tomorrow was going to be one heck of a bad day

Neatly she stacked the partially completed forms on her desk, turned out her lamp, and was heading for the door when she remembered that she still had the unused camera in her purse She didn't want to be responsible for Jack's newest toy any longer than was necessary and even took it out of its little case to make sure it hadn't been damaged A closer inspection she could see a tiny number five in the film window, but she knew she hadn't shot five frames Could it have been triggered in its case? Or did she load it incorrectly? That was something else she could do tomorrow reread the directions just in case she should ever have the opportunity to try it again Right now it really didn't matter how many frames had been used up accidentally because she certainly hadn't had an opportunity to use any of them the way she had intended Carefully she put it back in its case and set it on Jack's desk before she left, locking the office door behind her

The next morning Jack was already in the office when she arrived He waited until she had poured herself a cup of coffee and settled at her desk before asking, "So, tell me how did it go last week?

...ve got enough evidence to help Mrs. Davis's case.

No... she fudged, wishing fervently that she was one of those disgusting people who were at their best early in the morning. Unfortunately her brain never seemed to engage before ten o'clock.

Well, would you like to tell me about it? he asked, prompting her. His question more of a command than an inquiry. There's not much to tell actually. I served a feast's million drinks, turned down twice that many proposals, and followed Adam Davis around like his shadow for three days. All I collected for my efforts was a small fortune in tips, she said with a rueful smile. But nothing on Davis. He remains rather very experienced at covering his tracks or he's jumped up a rabbit. I never was able to catch him doing anything he shouldn't be doing, except on the last night. But I don't have any real proof, she added with an exasperated sigh.

He remained silent for several minutes after she had completed her story. He felt he was showing remarkable self-restraint when not saying all the things he would have gone to flush the rabbit from its love nest. He should have known she was too emotional for a gossip assignment like this one. Why he had sunk his private eyeballs into many adultery cases and had never failed to get some very revealing, compromising photographs. Of course he had barely escaped with his teeth in a place several times, and one irate lover had actually broken his nose, but that was all part of the thrill.

His slender fingers continued their agitated

drumming on his desk top as his deceptively casual gaze studied Kelly. He knew better than to come down too hard on her about this one failure. Since she had come to work for him three years ago, fresh out of college and eager to run her unquestionably exquisite legs to the ground on all the little nit-picking things that had to be done on each and every case, she had brought new life to this dusty old office. Unlike him, she had learned the profession by the books and seemed determined to try to conduct her cases by those rules. Grudgingly, he had to admit that she had a very logical mind and could be counted on to come up with some quick, sensible solutions, even if she didn't handle her jobs with the panache he personally, could add. The new generation of private eyes just weren't a class act.

At least, not as far as sleuthing was concerned. Before he had begun to feel toward her like a benevolent uncle, Jack had found his new prodigy almost too exciting as a woman. Even today, dressed in a tailored black skirt and long-sleeved gray blouse that tied at the neck in a large, loose bow, she looked thoroughly professional and untouchable, but inexplicably sexy. It wasn't just her beauty, even though her perfect classic features were arranged very attractively and her slim body curved in all the right places. In fact, her looks sometimes were detrimental when they kept her from being able to melt inconspicuously into a crowd while on an assignment. No one would ever be able to describe her as ordinary. It wasn't just her intelligence or her tenaciousness on following through with a job that made her

s on a professional. Rather, it was all these things combined with a self-confidence that had nothing to do with ego. She knew her self worth and never downplayed her assets or overstated her capabilities. Once she was given an assignment she didn't just sit around talking about her plans. She thought them out, then stuck to it until she accomplished what she had been sent out to do.

Except this time. What should have been a piece of cake had sent her back empty handed. But everyone should be allowed an occasional lapse. She was reacting to this failure much worse than he was, and he felt that any additional recriminations would have been too much.

"Hey, forget this one," Jack said, surprising her with a genuine smile. "We all have one that slips away sometimes."

"You're taking this a lot better than I thought you would," she couldn't resist commenting. "I know we could have used the other half of this fee. It's not often that we get a client who is not only willing to pay our price but has the money to do it."

"You've got that right. I'll tell you what you could do if it will make you feel any better," he suggested, his smile growing even wider, alerting her suspicions. "You could always split your tips with me. I could use half of a small fortune right now."

"Not on your life," Kelly said, laughing. "I earned every red cent with black and blue marks on places that those drunken fools would never have touched on you."

"I'm not so sure about that. You know what they

say about San Francisco.

You couldn't prove that by any of those guys at that convention. They were obviously all from out of town. I never realized electronics engineers were so undersexed and unimaginative. You wouldn't believe some of the high school approaches I feared.

"Maybe they'd spend more time with their computers than they do with females. The good thing about computers is that they never say no or slap their operators face if his hands slip off the keys."

"But I've never seen a computer that would have fit into that cutesy gypsy costume I had to wear." She groaned and rolled her large golden eyes expressively. "I have no idea what those men do with their computers in the privacy of their own homes, and I'm not sure I want to know. You wouldn't believe some of the lifelike robots they had on display."

Just as she was trying to think of a way to describe her uncomfortable meeting in Adam's hotel room, a messenger from the photolab arrived, making his morning deliveries. Jack demanded and received special one-day service because of his high volume of film developing, and the messenger routinely stopped by early each day with the previous day's batch. As Jack signed for the small stack Kelly tried to tackle her incomplete expense account. She could tell him the rest of the story later. After all, it was over and there was certainly no rush right now when he was busy checking out the latest photographs.

Once again Kelly began sorting her receipts and

[illegible] gurgles and choked sounds coming from it as he flipped through the snapshots.

Kelly, what do you suppose are the most photographed landmarks in San Francisco?" he asked casually.

She looked at him suspiciously. He certainly was acting strangely. "Why do you ask that?"

Just curious. I guess I've seen lots of nice shots of the Golden Gate Bridge, Fisherman's Wharf, Chinatown, the cable cars." He commented his eyes roaming with interest as he looked at her.

"No!" He was trying to get at something, but the student nurse had no clue as to what it could be.

I guess you didn't have much time for sightseeing, did you?"

Of course not," she answered indignantly. "I was in the hotel for a total of one week and by the time I was there."

Maybe next time you'll get out more." He stood up and casually walked around his desk and ceremoniously plopped one of the envelopes down in the middle of the papers creating a breeze that sent the contact sheets and small cash register tape flying everywhere.

These must be yours," he continued. "I was wondering if you could find time to take pictures of the Golden Gate Bridge." Expectantly he perched on the edge of her desk waiting for her reaction when she looked at the small color prints. He was not disappointed.

"My stars!" she exclaimed as her eyes grew wider

and wider. "These are pictures of a man's . . . her voice trailed off weakly.

"They certainly are," Jack prompted helpfully. "And he doesn't appear to be too concerned about wearing clothes."

"No, he wasn't, but—"

"I know that you took a course in photography at college, and I'm sure they taught you all the latest techniques, but on a surveillance of this kind don't you think you should have taken some pictures of the woman too?" He smiled sweetly, enjoying this unusual opportunity to bait her.

"There was no woman. . . . I mean, she was in the shower, and it was just him and me," she sputtered in confusion.

"So you decided to take some snapshots of your trip to San Francisco." Jack was barely able to resist smiling as she grew more uncomfortable by the moment. "Thank goodness we have an understanding photolab that won't turn us in to the police for pornography. I'm surprised that they would even develop this film."

"Oh, come on." Kelly defended herself, recovering some of her poise, which had been as badly scattered as her receipts. "You can't see any . . . uh, specific anatomy in any of these shots. The ends of that darn towel were always in the way." A twinkle sparkled in her hazel eyes, and she grinned as she began to share the humor of this bizarre scene.

"At least we know that the closeup lens works great. I'm sure these were just experimental photos, weren't they? Or maybe there was more to that last

night than you've told me."

"You know me better than that," she replied, trying to ignore an undeserved surge of guilty conscience. "That camera must have a hair trigger. I never realized I was taking those pictures. I admit that the situation did get a little out of control but not in the way you're thinking," she added hastily as the smirk on his face stretched wider. She would never admit just how much out of control it had gotten. And since she knew she would never see Adam Davis again, she could pass off her sexual stimulation as a natural response of nerves because she had broken into a devastatingly handsome and very nude man's room. "But what I'd like to know is, How did this film get developed so fast?"

"I was just trying to do you a favor," Jack answered, refusing to be intimidated as he slid off her desk and returned to his own. "I got into the office late last night, saw the camera lying on my desk, and assuming that you had taken some valuable pictures, I dropped the film off at the photolab on my way home."

"That's what I call real overnight service," she mumbled, stuffing the photos back into their envelope.

"Do you think we should send these to Mrs. Davis?" He tossed her one last barb. "It might give her something to remember her husband by after the divorce."

In response Kelly promptly Frisbeed the envelope across the room, hitting him sharply in the chest.

It was a lazy, warm Saturday afternoon and Kelly and her landlady were sitting on the back porch swing drinking iced tea and talking about old movies. Or rather Alice was doing the talking and Kelly was half listening. The weather in Southern California was perpetually spring-like but it somehow was more fitting today since it actually was spring. It also gave Kelly an excuse for this mild case of spring fever that she couldn't seem to shake off. For the last month she had had to struggle to keep her mind on her current cases and away from Room 632 and the man with a gorgeous body and lips that had caused her heart to beat wildly. But she tried consciously to ignore these traitorous feelings because they offended her strong sense of morality and fairness. There could be no justification for her being attracted to a married man, regardless of the condition of that marriage, especially when she had been employed by the long-suffering ex-wife-to-be.

Just as Alice was about to talk her into going to a silent film festival that evening, the ring of Kelly's telephone mercifully intervened.

"Kelly, you've got to come to the office immediately," Jack insisted in a loud, but muffled whisper when she answered the phone. "You'll never guess who's in our bathroom."

"You're right," she agreed. "Guessing the occupants of bathrooms has never been one of my strong points, as you should know from my trip to San Francisco."

"Cut the jokes. Mrs. Davis just dropped in on me and wants us to follow up on her case, but she wants

to talk to you." He didn't add that he had opted not really meant to volunteer his own services, but Vicki Davis had been most insistent that Kelly stay on the case.

All sorts of things were whirling through Kelly's mind, some sensible and others downright disturbing. She would have another chance to see Adam, but on the other hand another awkward situation might arise. Of course she was intelligent enough not to let that happen, and if it should, she knew she could get out of it. There could be no repeat performance of that night. She had never been so affected by a man, and since she recognized the temptation, she could deal with it. Wasn't it? But still she hesitated.

"Why can't you take it, Dick? Maybe you can handle him better than I did."

"The customer wants you, and we always want our customers to be happy, don't we?" The words hissed through his clenched teeth, before he added in a more reassuring tone, "I have faith in you. You won't let the weasel slip away this time." Then Kelly heard him say in a normal voice away from the phone, "I'm talking to her now, Mrs. Davis. She said she'll be here as soon as possible." Then into the mouthpiece he said, "Isn't that right, Kelly?"

Since it was more of a command than a question, she answered with a resigned sigh. "I'm on my way, boss."

"I'm really desperate," the attractive well-dressed woman cried, gingerly dabbing her eyes with a dry tissue. "Adam came home after the convention and

was so sweet and loving to me and the children. Then yesterday he packed his suitcases and left for Florida. He said it was a business trip," she sniffed delicately, "but that's what he always calls his little excursions."

Kelly was watching Vicki Davis closely. She appeared to be genuinely upset, but she had been crying for the past five minutes, and not one tear had slipped out of those baby blue eyes. Maybe she was just reserved, like the cool blondes in Alfred Hitchcock movies, or perhaps she had already cried all the tears she had for her wayward husband. Kelly didn't dare try to sort out her own feelings on this matter. She didn't want to know if the reason she wanted to stay on this case was because of the genuine sympathy she felt for this woman or because she wanted to see again the man whose attractive face had crept mysteriously into her dreams several times since that night in San Francisco.

"I know he is an electrical engineer, but exactly what kind of work does your husband do, Mrs. Davis?" Kelly asked gently.

"Please call me Vicki," she answered with a weak smile. "Oh, Adam is something of an electronics genius. He's always been interested in electronics. When he was a boy, he practically lived at Disneyland, finding out as much as he could about their robots and special effects. I believe they call it audioanimation when they make characters that can talk, sing, and move with realistic action," she answered, then added proudly, "In the last few years, Adam has been acknowledged as a leader in this

field and is in demand to work on developmental projects for the Disney organization and on movies and television shows."

Did he say why he had to go to Florida?" Kelly prompted.

He said they were working on some new exhibit at Epcot Center and they needed him to help iron out the bugs in the system. I know it sounds plausible, but I've heard it all before. I want to but I just don't believe his excuses anymore."

"Exactly what do you want me to do?"

My attorney has convinced me that it's probably too late to save my marriage. He says that to protect myself and my children from being kicked out in the cold I need some solid proof for a divorce case."

Kelly felt that Vicki's attorney was being overly cynical by painting such a bleak picture. Surely not even Adam would be so cruel and heartless to his family regardless of his insensitivity about flaunting his love life. But then, how well did she know this man, especially compared to his own wife? What magic did he possess that could turn her into his champion with just one kiss? Even Vicki had become a martyr to her love, holding on until she could no longer bear his infidelities.

"And you want me to get that proof," Kelly stated flatly.

Yes. Do whatever you have to do to get it for me and my babies. I know I'm a love him, but I have to be sensible for once. I'll give you carte blanche to stay on his trail until you come back with something that will satisfy my attorney and the courts."

A feeling of relief that she was being given a second chance to work on this case mixed with a shiver of anticipation. Was she looking forward to another meeting with Adam Davis to bring him to justice? Or were her reasons more personal than she chose to admit? This case was becoming a challenge not only to her skills, but also to her professionalism. She would accept Mrs. Davis's offer. She would follow him to Florida and do whatever she decided was necessary to get some evidence for Vicki's case. But this time things would be different. She would stay in control, and this time she would succeed.

CHAPTER THIRTE

Kerry's first impression was that central Florida and southern California had much in common. The sun was just as hot and even the palm trees and exotic tropical blooming plants looked familiar. But the fact remained that she had traveled over twenty four hundred miles from coast to coast to do a job and she was determined to do it well. During the long plane ride she had conducted a silent pep-talk mentally preparing herself mentally and emotionally for the task ahead.

Already fate was working against her. Before she had left L.A. she had telephoned the Polynesian Village the hotel where Adam was registered only to be told that not only were there no vacancies but that they were booked for several months in advance. The only other major hotel actually on the Disney World property the Contemporary Resort Hotel was also filled to capacity. That meant that she would not be able to enjoy the convenience and effectiveness that staying in the same hotel would have allowed. The closest accommodation she had been

able to find was the Heart Orlando which was out of the Lisney complex and several miles down High way 192. She had no complaints with her room which was very clean and comfortable but now her plan of action would have to undergo a few revisions.

First of all it was necessary to hang around Adams Well long enough to observe his daily routine more importantly his nightly destinations. This meant that she could not stay in the more public areas such as the shops and restaurants for as long as it took until Adam put in an appearance. The major challenge would be to remain conspicuous while remaining the constant unnoticed registered guests and visitors she could be too difficult.

Second she must refine her explanations so that they would pop out naturally if she were confronted by one of the hotel employees or even Adam himself in the unlikely event that he should notice her. But here Dawn prided herself on being able to wing it when necessary so she wasn't really concerned about her answers.

And third she would not go home empty handed — even if she had to sleep under the bed every night or take a job washing the hotel's windows so she could get some good swimming photographs. This time she wouldn't fail she told herself in her own ability and from Vicki's comments she shouldn't take long for Adam to make his move. A secretive suspecting female

But Adam proved to be a most accommodat

ing man. Later that afternoon Kelly waited for him lounging with studied casualness on one of the tawny rattan turquoise wicker chairs on the second level of the lobby of the Polynesian Village. Just after six o'clock Adam returned to the hotel, entering through the glass doors that led from the monorail terminal. Irrepressibly Kelly's heart did a little somersault at the sight of him.

He looked as good as a man could look fully dressed. She remembered clearly how magnificent his body was, even though dark slacks now covered his long, well-muscled legs and his virile chest was hidden by a slightly rumpled pale blue shirt. Only a glimpse of his tanned forearms was revealed by the shirt sleeves that had been rolled up almost to his elbows. He wasn't wearing a tie or carrying a sport jacket, but he appeared to have just come in from work. Raking a recalcitrant lock of hair back from his forehead, he stopped to pick up his messages at the desk before continuing slowly, flipping through the small pink-colored notes as he crossed the huge lobby, went down the stairs, and outside to the courtyard area.

Kelly had already studied the layout of the hotel and knew that there were nine two- and three-story buildings called "longhouses" that stretched outward in choppy wings from the main lobby. Each longhouse was named after a Pacific island, and each of the over six hundred rooms loyally kept to the South Seas decor. She watched as Adam entered the section named Bora Bora before she, too, quickly descended the stairs.

Kelly followed at a discreet distance staying near the entrance of the Bora Bora and pretending to pause to study the lush plant life but never letting Adam out of her sight as he moved down the short corridor. After he entered his room she changed her observation post to the area outside his building where she could keep an eye on the exits at both ends. His building was located between the hotel's two swimming pools and about halfway between the lobby and the small private beach that had been created along with the man-made lagoon at the back of the complex. Regardless of his destination she would be able to see him as soon as he left the Bora Bora.

But as she was trying to find a comfortable spot on the palm tree she had chosen to lean against, the drapes at Adam's patio door suddenly parted. She froze as he pulled the glass door open and rested one shoulder against the doorjamb. His gaze stretched out across the lagoon, following a colorful sailboat as it drifted in lazy zigzags, powered by a gentle evening breeze. Kelly remained motionless. She knew that any movement would draw his attention to her, and she held her breath, hoping he would step back into his room soon. But, as if sensing he was being watched, his eyes shifted, passing over the busy pool area and inexplicably stopping to stare straight at her.

For a split second their eyes met across the distance until Kelly, with a flash of ingenuity, stepped away from the protective shadows of the tree and walked boldly up to a strange man who was sitting

alone at a poolside table. She barely noticed the balding middle-aged person who was dressed in a bright printed Hawaiian shirt that effectively branded him as a tourist but rather saw him only as a convenient escape. Smoothly she sat down across from him, smiling as if they were old dear friends and struck up a conversation with the startled gentleman all the while keeping a guarded watch on Adam.

"I'm sorry, miss, but do I know you?" the stranger asked tentatively, not wanting to be rude to this attractive young lady who had joined him so suddenly.

"Of course not," she answered, but her warm smile and intimate gaze seemed to be saying something quite different.

The man was struck speechless as he stared at her. The situation became even more baffling as she continued the one-sided conversation in a near whisper, even though Adam was too far away to overhear.

"I'm sorry to bother you like this. I can't explain, but I just have to sit here for a moment. I would appreciate it if you would act as if you knew me and were waiting for me."

"Sure, but what should I do?" he asked, still confused, but willing to play along.

"Kiss my hand."

"What?"

"Just kiss my hand. You know, like Sir Lancelot meeting Queen Guinevere for the first time."

"Are we on one of those game shows?" he queried, looking around suspiciously.

"No, this is a personal matter. Please help me."

she pleaded, her hazel eyes widening irresistibly.

"Well, okay. I guess." Clumsily he reached across the table, took her hand, and pressed it against his dry lips. "Was that all right?" he asked nervously.

At last Adam's tall form disappeared from his patio doorway, and Kelly breathed a sigh of relief. Although he had certainly taken his time, he hadn't appeared to have recognized her. He had probably not even given the brief time their eyes had met a second thought, even though Kelly's heart still hammered in her chest. Abruptly she stood up.

"You did just fine. Thank you very much," she said, pulling her hand from his limp grasp before walking back into the lobby. She would resume her observation from inside the building.

"I can't leave you alone for a minute, can I?" A stern voice penetrated the man's bewildered thoughts. "And if you try to tell me that she's one of those cuties you call your little secretarial assistants, and she's come here all the way from back home in Kansas City just to bring you an important message, don't expect me to believe it. I didn't crawl out of the turnip patch just yesterday, you know."

The poor man shook his head helplessly. "Honestly, dear, I never saw that woman before in my life."

But his wife's accusations kept coming. "I went back to our room to get my purse and expected you to order the drinks while I was gone. And what do I find when I come back? A pina colada? No. My husband, sitting here all moon-eyed, kissing some

strange woman's hand."

"She told me to," he answered defensively. "I don't really know what happened. She just sat down, asked me to kiss her hand, then disappeared."

"That was your cue to turn into a handsome prince," his wife muttered peevishly, still not believing a word he had said but suddenly feeling very possessive toward him. It had been years since she had had to fight off pretty young women. Maybe he was entering some sort of mid-life crisis, and she would have to keep him under a closer watch.

Kelly was totally oblivious to the uproar she had caused as she found herself a new place to watch Adam's building. The day's exhausting plane trip and the long wait for him to arrive from work had taken its toll. When she felt herself dozing off, she took a couple of brisk turns around the lobby in hopes of stimulating her tired senses. It was really an impressive room with its tall glass ceiling and convenient double-decked ring of shops, restaurants, and lounges that all managed to luxuriously echo the beauty of its South Seas decor. The lobby was actually called the Great Ceremonial House and had enough greenery to give the impression of a controlled tropical jungle. It was all very exotic, but even with the constant bustle of people moving about, the atmosphere was much too peaceful for someone who needed to stay awake.

By eleven o'clock she had talked herself into calling it a night. Wearily she drove her small rented car out of the parking area and returned to her own hotel. It was obvious that Adam must have decided

to stay in his room tonight, and since she had been watching it carefully, he had to be alone because she had seen no unescorted women enter the Bora Bora. She reasoned that surely even Hugh Hefner needed to take an occasional night off to rest up for future activities.

Early the next morning Kelly was back, eating a delicious breakfast as slowly as possible so she could wait for Adam to leave for work. Just after eight she saw him leave his building. He was dressed much as he had been the day before but looked much fresher, the ends of his dark hair still damp from his shower. The sharp, chiseled angles of his handsome face were clean-shaven, and her heart beat rapidly as she remembered his distinct masculine aroma.

Kelly watched from her seat in the restaurant as he entered the Great Ceremonial House. She was preparing to get up to follow him to the monorail when, to her dismay, instead of turning left as he reached the top of the stairway, he strolled leisurely into the restaurant. He was greeted immediately by the hostess, who led him to a table by the window. Unfortunately they had to pass right by Kelly's table to get there.

Unable to make a discreet escape, she tried to become invisible, but it didn't work. Even though she was staring down at her empty plate, something compelled her to look up just as Adam reached her table. Again, as if drawn together by some mysterious unknown force, her dark-fringed golden eyes were pierced for a fleeting second by his curious glance. Denying herself the pleasure of returning his half-

mute she lowered her gaze and began to look for something in her handbag.

She knew it would look awfully suspicious if he saw her sitting in the lobby when he left, so she decided to delay her exit from the restaurant by ordering another cup of coffee and an order of toast. There was no way she could force another bite down, but it just seemed to be the wisest plan of action. She had pulled a travel brochure of Disney World out of her purse and now she pretended to study it while covertly watching Adam.

His waitress, obviously a woman who appreciated masculine perfection, fluttered up to him and handed him a menu. After taking his order, she solicitously brought him a newspaper. With the briefest of polite smiles he thanked her as he took it, then promptly turned his attention to the printed pages. A tiny pout crossed the waitress's pretty young face as she left him to his reading. She obviously had expected a little more of a personal reaction from this man.

So, Adam Kelly liked bitter waitresses, didn't he? That somewhat eccentric taste for women, or he had someone already lined up for today. We'll see, Kelly would stick to his trail until she found out who the woman was.

After a breakfast that was much lighter and quicker than hers had been, Adam left the restaurant. Kelly followed him to the monorail and sat in the compartment behind his. She almost lost him at the terminal when they had to change monorails to continue their journey to Epcot Center. But even in the

press of the crowd that separated them she was able to keep sight of the back of his neatly styled dark head as he stepped out of the bullet shaped car and wound along the maze of sidewalks before getting on a different monorail.

Once they arrived at Epcot Kelly's long legs had to work hard to keep up with him as he strode purposefully along a path that was only too familiar to him. She was delayed having to get her ticket stamped but she caught up with him as he reached the hidden entrance to the elevator that would take him down into that mystery kingdom beneath Epcot since the public wasn't allowed underground in the work area where the computers and offices were located. Kelly had to turn her attention to the futuristic world above ground.

She was fascinated by the visual and mental smorgasbord that surrounded her. She longed to visit each of the complex expositions but her purpose here was not to sightsee. She had to figure out a way to keep an eye on her subject. It did not take her long to realize that from the way Epcot was arranged it would be virtually impossible to conduct any sort of surveillance. There were just too many exhibits and too much space to cover with any hope for success. She had seen the brochures, but she had not guessed at the vastness or the complexity of the center. After admitting that it would be senseless for her to stay here she returned to the Polynesian Village. Besides it was unlikely that he would go anywhere else before returning to his room first. After all he hadn't driven a car to work and would almost have to ride

the monorail back unless his date picked him up in her car

At six P.M. Adam did return alone and went straight to his hotel room. Behaving completely out of character from the man that Kelly had observed Adam left his room just long enough for a brief solitary swim in one of the pools then reared for the night. He even had his dinner delivered to his room. Again Kelly spent a long, lonely evening watching other people come and go. Whether they had spent the day twirling in teacups, being attacked by pirates, or visiting over half a dozen foreign countries and outer space in one afternoon, she discovered that regardless of age or background, everyone shared one common denominator that was clearly imprinted on their exhausted, but happy faces. It was difficult not to have a good time here unless one was stuck in the lobby, no matter how enchanting, for the major part of one's visit.

Aitea Peatea, which translated roughly into "There will be another day tomorrow, just like today," was the Polynesian Village's motto. All too quickly it also became Kelly's.

Two more days much like her first one had passed, and she was no closer to a successful conclusion. Late Friday night, after she had returned to her own hotel room, she knew she should touch base with Jack but wasn't looking forward to answering any of the questions she was certain he would be asking. Allowing for the time difference she guessed that he would have finished dinner and was either reviewing the notes on one of his cases

or watching a detective show on television. Biting the bullet, she dialed his home number and waited for his gruff hello. After a bare minimum of small talk he got straight to the point.

"So what have you discovered so far?" he questioned.

"Well, I found out that none of the shoes I brought with me are adequate for the amount of walking that is required in a place like this."

"And?"

"That Epcot really stands for Environmental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, and that Walt Disney originally came up with the idea for this technological masterpiece way back in October of 1966, even though it wasn't opened until 1982."

"Very impressive," was Jack's sarcastic response. "Now give me some dirt on Davis."

"So far he's been Mr. Clean," she replied with an exasperated sigh. "The man hasn't even talked to a woman except to give her his meal orders or pick up his messages, that is. Unless he's got something going with one of the groundhogs that work in the tunnels."

"Groundhogs?"

"Just a term I've given the people that work underground. It seems that there is a whole city down there that is the nerve center for both Disney World and Epcot. Since it's employees only, I have no idea what's really going on. But if it's run like everything else here, I would guess it's strictly professional."

"So our boy is behaving himself, eh? Well, stick it out. Sooner or later Adam will be tempted to take

a bite of the forbidden fruit and you'd better be there before he has time to cover his tracks."

"Thanks for the bedtime story," Kelly said with a chuckle. "I'll call you again next week or sooner if the snake succeeds."

She hung up the phone and stretched out on the bed to dissect the last three and a half days for anything she might have overlooked.

There was something that was gnawing at her subconscious. Although she still didn't know much more about Adam with each passing hour of surveillance she found herself feeling more and more attracted to him in a manner that was not at all professional. There was something oddly intimate about the simple act of watching him eat breakfast. After seeing him first thing every morning and last thing every night coming and going to work and sitting alone eating his meals it was as if they had formed a kind of friendship even though he was not aware of her existence.

Exhausted she fell asleep stretched across the bed covers still fully dressed. Strange dreams of Adam haunted her. He was clothed only in a single modestly placed fig leaf wandering through a lush tropical Garden of Eden that looked suspiciously like the Great Ceremonial House. He seemed to be searching for someone or something. With the intuitiveness of the dream world Kelly knew what he was trying to find his Eve and she was Eve. Adam saw her as she lounged by a huge roaring waterfall waiting for him. Poetically she was wearing the same navy and white print jumpsuit she had been wearing

today but he didn't seem to notice her outfit. Much too slowly he moved toward her, his light blue eyes burning with a passion he'd never felt before, and it was all for her. When at last he reached her, they didn't speak but came together in an embrace of hunger and love. His large hands caressed her eager body, her clothes having mysteriously disappeared until together they sank down among the soft feathery ferns and began to?

Abruptly Kelly woke up, her body tingling with unfulfilled desires. Her pulse was racing, and her breath was short, as if she had just been exercising strenuously — or making love. She was aghast as the memory of the dream flooded into her consciousness. What on earth had prompted such a fantasy?

She forced herself to change into her nightgown. It must be because she was spending all of her waking hours either following Adam or thinking about what he might do next; her subconscious would throw it back at her while she was asleep. There could be no other excuse for envisioning herself as his Eve. Wearily she slipped back into bed. She tried to tell herself that she probably would have dreamed about him even if he were seventy-five years old, bald-headed, and toothless, after having seen him so much the last few days. Logically that was a good explanation, and she refused to consider any other motive. Any personal feelings about Adam would be completely inexcusable. She was too strong to ever allow something like that to happen, wasn't she? Again her last thoughts before drifting off to sleep

were of one man who was causing so much trouble without even realizing he was, but this time her dreams were peaceful and unmemorable.

Saturday morning was a busy time at the hotel, with people checking in and out and those already settled in their rooms preparing for a full day's activities. Kelly waited in the gift shop until Adam decided which restaurant to choose for breakfast. Casually she sauntered into the restaurant a few seconds after he did and found herself a table behind a natural barrier of potted schefflera. She peered through the forest of crooked green stalks and clusters of flat oval leaves, searching the crowd for the sight of the dark-headed man who would probably be sitting alone at a table. When she couldn't seem to locate him she twisted around a little more in her chair and partially parted the flexible stems so she could get a better view. Suddenly a man's voice very near her made her jump.

"Looking for someone?"

CHAPTER FOUR

Kelly had heard that voice only once before but she had no doubt to whom it belonged. Caught completely off-guard, she resisted the impulse to whirl around and face the man. Instead she forced her stiff hands to release their death hold on the fragile schefflera stems then jabbed her right forefinger into the dirt at the base of the plant.

"Definitely needs water," she asked, allowing herself to turn slowly, the composure fully restored to her feminine features. "I thought those leaves looked a little crisp. I think I'll mention it to the desk clerk." She was able to avoid his gaze for a moment longer as she wiped the dirt off her finger with her napkin but the confrontation was unavoidable.

"Did you ask me something?" she inquired innocently, looking up at Adam for the first time. He towered over her, his casual T-shirt and off-white shorts emphasizing his fantastic physique and California tan. Straight white teeth flashed behind his friendly grin as he considered her reaction.

"The way you were shredding that plant, I

thought perhaps you'd like something or some one." There was a sparkle in his vivid blue eyes but told her he was not buying her story, but he didn't press her. "Anyway, what I really wanted was to ask if you would mind if I sat with you. We've got breakfast." As I sensing her anticipation of his suggestion, I quickly added, "I'm not trying to make a pass at you or anything. It's just that I'm here alone and I've noticed that you're too. So I thought that maybe we could be alone together."

Kelly's mind whirled in confusion. This was really a very awkward situation. While she had been watching him he had been watching her. A tiny voice told her that she should avoid at all costs any sort of direct contact with this man.

But his endearing smile and unsettling nearness weakened her defenses. Maybe if they became friends it would make her task easier by giving her an insight into his habits. She would just have to make certain that he understood that she was interested in nothing beyond a few days of completely platonic companionship and that he was welcome to pursue his own romantic interests at will as long as she wasn't included.

"We'll be seated," fascinated by the play of emotions animating her face.

"Sure, why not," she answered with a shrug of apparent indifference then added with irrepressible good humor. "But how am I to know that you're not an ax murderer or something?"

"My ax wouldn't fit in my suitcase, so I left it at home. I guarantee that you'll be perfectly safe with

me

My boyfriend will be glad to hear that." Kelly had quickly decided that it might simplify the situation just to let him believe that she was already involved with someone and then he wouldn't feel obligated to try to add her to his mile-long list of conquests. "He's meeting me here sometime next week, but I wouldn't mind a little companionship until then." Lying without wavering was probably the most difficult trick she had had to learn about being a detective. It didn't come naturally to her, but she had discovered that sometimes it was a necessary means to the end result for which her client was paying.

He nodded his head in silent acknowledgment of the restrictions she had just imposed on their relationship, then pulled out the chair opposite hers and sat down.

"By the way, what's your name?" he asked while glancing briefly over the menu.

"Oh? me? ?" she stuttered momentarily undecided about whether to tell him her real name or use an alias. Since her own name could not possibly be familiar to him, and it would be easier for her, she continued, "Kelly. Kelly McCain."

"And me Adam Davis," he echoed in a skillful imitation of Tarzan. "This jungle atmosphere must have gotten to you too."

"It's like being in another world, isn't it?" she agreed, laughing with him and feeling herself relaxing. "Have you stayed here before?"

"Several times. I've stayed at the Contemporary

Resort and the Treehouse Villas, but this hotel is my favorite. I can understand why it's so popular with the tourists. It's like a vacation within a vacation. A person never has to leave the complex to have a good time. Have you had a chance to sail on the Lagoon or slide through the waterfall in the pool?"

"No. Actually, I haven't done much sight seeing," she answered truthfully.

"You're kidding!" he exclaimed in disbelief. "You've been visiting paradise and not taking advantage of its fringe benefits?"

"I wouldn't enjoy doing those things by myself," she blurted out. Then added nasally, "Actually, I just haven't taken time to explore the area."

"I know what you mean about being alone. This place is like Noah's Ark with everyone already paired off. Even the children seem to come in twos. But this must be your lucky day. I've got the whole weekend off with nothing to do but show you around."

"I wouldn't want to take up your time. I'm sure you've got plenty of people to socialize with here." Her voice trailed off as she waited for his response.

Adam looked around the crowded room with an exaggerated sigh. "Not a soul in sight. It looks like we're stuck with each other for a couple of days." Again that devastating smile warmed his handsome features. "Actually you're very lucky to have me," he teased.

"And you're very conceited," she retorted, her blaze eyes twinkling merrily.

"No. I didn't mean it that way." He waved his

hand between them as if to erase her inaccurate conclusion. "I meant that you couldn't have found a better tour guide if you had hired one. I know Disney World, Epcot, and almost all of central Florida like the back of my hand. I can tell you things you'd never hear from Mickey himself."

"You don't have to go with me to all of those places," she protested. She was struggling over whether or not to allow this friendship to develop. Ordinarily there would be no question of her fraternizing with a client or subject, but this was different. She was certainly not having any success with her normal methods, so perhaps this could be the answer to her problem. Evidently he didn't have any dates lined up that she would be interfering with, but still she hesitated. "There's no reason for you to entertain me."

For the first time all signs of humor left his face as his clear blue gaze held her captive. "I don't know why, but I just had a feeling we'd get along well. I really want you to go with me. Seeing it through your eyes will be like visiting it again for the first time. Besides," he added with the return of his sexy crooked grin, "you would be doing me a big favor. I've been working a lot lately, and as everyone knows, all work and no play makes Adam a dull boy."

"I have a sneaking suspicion that you're never dull."

"It's one of my goals in life," he agreed, sharing her laughter.

It was the most enjoyable meal she had had in a

long time, even though later she couldn't really remember what she had eaten. Adam was even funnier and more charming than she had anticipated and after Vicki's reports, her expectations had been high. Unconsciously they drew it out as long as possible, neither wanting to be the one to break the fragile thread that now connected them.

At last they could dawdle no more, and when Kelly made a move as if to leave, Adam was quick to suggest, "It's too late in the day to attack Epcot or Disney World, so why don't we change into our swimsuits and see if the water feels as good as it looks?"

It felt even better. Kelly waited until he entered his building before she rushed frantically into the apparel shop downstairs, bought a tan one-piece swimsuit and a coverup, then changed in the rest room.

She met Adam at their prearranged place by the indoor fountain, then followed his lead through the maze of longhouses and surroundings to a large freeform pool called the Swimming Lagoon. There were actually two pools on the property, but while the other one was just an ordinary oval shape, this one went to great lengths to carry out the tropical theme. It was complete with a water slide that gave the impression of having been formed naturally out of a tall group of boulders that lined one side of the pool. There was even a shimmering waterfall rushing over the rocks in a smooth sheet into the pool. It was so beautiful and unique that even the most sedate swimmer would be tempted to take the plunge.

The water was a most refreshing change from the heat and the boredom of the last few days. Kelly enjoyed the smooth sensual feel of the cool water against her almost bare body. With very little coaxing Adam talked her into splashing through the waterfall as they careened wildly down the rock hewn slide. She felt a little immature but strenuously denied that she and Adam were not the only adults participating in this elementary thrill.

After an hour or so it seemed a natural progression to move from the rigorous exercise in the pool to the total inactivity of lying on lounge chairs that had been set up on the small private beach that curved along that part of the seven seas lagoon. Wanting to take full advantage of the warmth of the sun's rays Kelly spread a generous amount of coconut tanning oil on the extensive amount of skin that her new swimsuit exposed then stretched out on her back her eyes closed against the glare of the sun.

Adam lowered himself on the chair next to hers and allowed himself the liberty of studying her as she lay there. There was a pleasant balance of strength and delicacy about her facial features that fascinated him. Of course, her softly curved lithe body had attracted his attention immediately but it was the intelligence and spirit that he had discovered during this morning's breakfast that held his interest. Maybe he was unusual, but it wasn't a perfect feminine body that could most completely ease the inevitable loneliness on an out-of-town job, but the pleasure of matching wits and talking to someone of

equal intelligence, preferably female, made it easier to be away from home so much.

"Somehow you don't look like the type who would own a leopard print swimsuit," he commented softly.

Kelly opened one eye and glanced down at the soft brown-toned maillot that she had grabbed off the sale rack. He was right. It wasn't a suit she would have chosen if she had had the time to shop, but it had been one of the less revealing styles in her size and she hadn't had time to be choosy. Still she found herself bristling at his insinuation that she didn't match the primitive wildness the pattern suggested. "And what kind of swimsuit would you pick for me, one with a little skirt and a turtleneck?"

"No. Actually, I had something much smaller in mind," he teased. "Maybe with flowers or stripes." They both fell silent again, busy with their own thoughts as they took advantage of the sun's warmth.

"I know this sounds like a tired old line, but haven't we met before? I can't place it, but you look vaguely familiar." Adam startled her with this unwelcomed revelation.

Kelly knew that the odds were against his actually remembering where he had seen her before since they had met so briefly and under circumstances much different from today's. Also, it was to her advantage that they were on opposite coasts from their original contact. Still she had to force herself not to overreact to his question as she huffed her way through an explanation.

"I just have one of those faces," she answered

with a shrug of her slim, bare shoulders. "Everyone tells me I look just like their best friend Sheila, their cousin Sue, or their dog Spot. That's one of the consequences of being of average height with plain brown hair and ordinary hazel eyes." She slipped gracefully over onto her stomach so she could watch his reaction to her casual dismissal of his inquiry. Only her trailing forefinger that was doodling interlocking circles in the powdery silver sand revealed the nervousness she was feeling.

He didn't comment. He knew she would misinterpret it if he told her that when he looked at her, he didn't see anything that was either plain or ordinary. Instead his eyes caressed her well-proportioned, sun-kissed figure from the tips of her small, sandy toes, up the gentle curves of her long legs, over the rounded hill of her buttocks, and up her smooth back to her shoulders, which were partially covered by a long, flowing silken veil of hair. He would have described the color not as brown but as a glowing sienna. And her eyes could more accurately be called extraordinary, with their unique blend of quick flashes of green and warm reflections of gold. She had completely captivated him. But still he couldn't shake the feeling that he had seen her somewhere before this week.

Kelly became a little uncomfortable under his silent scrutiny, and a brilliant idea was suddenly formulated in her mind. A quick glance around the beach area located a prospective victim, and she tried to divert his attention away from her.

"That blonde over there playing Frisbee is a real

knockout. I'll bet no one has ever mistaken her for their cousin." Kelly's logic was simple. If she succeeded, not only would he stop trying to remember where he'd met her before, but he might even be tempted to get to know the bimbo well enough so that Kelly could get her incriminating pictures and go home.

Obediently Adam watched the blonde jump and bounce until he thought he would become seasick. "Not bad, but I've never developed a taste for Jell-O," he responded wryly.

Not easily discouraged, Kelly turned her attention to a tall brunette dressed in a teensy white bikini who was jogging by their lounge chairs. "Now there's a woman you wouldn't have to be reticent being. She's in great shape."

"Too healthy." Adam dismissed the brunette after only a brief glance. "She has more muscles than I do. I'd bet she hasn't eaten a potato chip or an M&M in years. I don't trust people who don't eat junk food. They're so unnatural that it's unnatural."

"Okay, forget her then. So what about—" Kelly started to call his attention to a slightly pumped, but pretty, redhead when he abruptly interrupted.

"That reminds me. We haven't had lunch yet. What would you say to a bacon cheeseburger, French fries, and an ice-cream cone for dessert?" he suggested as he stood up.

Her stomach growled an agreement, but she couldn't resist answering. "Well, I don't know." She pretended to hesitate before continuing with a grin. "Maybe if it were onion rings instead of fries—"

"Let's go before that Amazon jogs by again. I think she's already made about six laps around his area." Adam said, helping her up from her lounge chair.

"So you already noticed her." Kelly accused giving him a playful punch on his arm. "And you acted like that was the first time you had seen her."

"Of course I noticed. I have excellent eyesight but I also have a very discriminating taste in females. Besides a gentleman should never pay attention to any woman other than the one he is with at that moment." he answered laughing at her mild indignation.

"You're not with me." she corrected immediately.

"Excuse me." he drawled out in a perfect Steve Martin imitation. "I didn't realize I had suddenly become invisible." His reply came out sharper than he had intended. He really couldn't figure this woman out. Not only did she want to make sure he understood that she was not interested in anything other than a tight friendship but she even threw other women at him trying to set him up with someone else.

"Don't take it personally. I didn't mean it the way it sounded. I've had a very good time this morning and I appreciate your companionship. It's just that I don't want you to miss out on anything because of me."

"I promise." he solemnly swore raising his hand in a stiff Boy-Scout salute. "From now on I make a pass at every woman I see just to make you happy."

"It's a dirty job but someone has to do it." she teased. "Just don't feel you have to change any of

your plans because of me."

"I want you to know that I'm sincere. I'll include you in the plans I've already made for this evening." She didn't notice the devilish twinkle in his blue eyes as they made the short journey to the Barefoot Snack Bar for lunch.

"This wasn't exactly what I thought you would be doing this evening," Kelly commented good-naturedly.

"You told me not to change my plans, and this is what I had planned to do tonight."

"No one could ever accuse you of not knowing how to show a woman a good time." She shifted on the hard plastic chair trying not to stare at the clothes as they tumbled through the dry cycle. "If I had known we were going to spend the evening in the hotel laundry room I would have brought some of my clothes. I feel sort of left out with nothing of my own shrinking in one of those machines."

"I refuse to listen to any complaints. I wanted to take you out to sample some of the local nightlife, but I didn't want you to think that I was trying to impress you." Adam couldn't resist laughing at her expression.

"I have to admit that this is an unusual evening I won't soon forget. There're not many men who invite me along to watch their underwear dry."

"And you should feel privileged. I can't remember ever asking any other woman to sit with me and watch mine dry."

"I can understand why you wouldn't. Your reputation could be severely damaged if the person saw

that you wear pink shorts," she retorted, teasing him mercilessly as they simultaneously turned to watch the one pair of hot pink shorts toss among the more normal white and subtly patterned ones.

"My sister gave me those as a gag gift," he defended with a sheepish grin. "She has sort of a weird sense of humor sometimes."

"So why do you wear them, then?"

"Oddly enough, they're the most comfortable pair I own." Suddenly, as if he had just realized the subject of their conversation, a genuine, infectious laugh shook his large frame, taking her by surprise. "This is the strangest discussion I've had in a long time."

"This is the strangest evening I've spent in a long time," she echoed, sharing his merriment. "I can't believe I'm sitting here, but even more, I can't believe *you're* sitting here. Why on earth would a man in your position do his own laundry?"

"I always do my own laundry back home," he explained. "I don't mind sending my shirts out, but it seems sort of frivolous to send out my underwear. Usually, when I'm at a job like this, I have a lot of time to kill in the evenings, so I save a couple of bucks and kill a few hours."

Kelly was silent as she digested this startling information. What kind of a wife was Vicki to make her husband do his own laundry when he was at home? And why would a playboy of Adam's caliber have so much time to kill that he would spend it in what must be one of the most boring places in the world . . . a laundry room?

And still she had no evidence of his womanizing

ng. Other than befriending her, he hadn't even tried to seduce her, and he sure hadn't shown the women on the beach much interest.

The small red light blinked off, and the dryer stopped its noisy tumble. Since Adam had already refused her offer to help, she remained seated and watched him. It gave her an opportunity to study him as he stuffed armloads of clothes into the pillowcase he was using for a laundry basket. He was ducking his dark head inside the warm drum, checking for recalcitrant socks and other articles of clothing that clung to the metallic sides, when a woman came over to him.

"Excuse me, but are you through with that dryer?" a soft feminine voice asked. The tall willowy body that belonged to the voice moved into Adam's as he poked his head out of the dryer and noticed the attractive woman next to him. "You poor man! Let Sue Ann help you with all those clothes." The more she talked, the more pronounced her southern drawl became. As if to stop him from continuing his task, she placed her long red-tipped fingers around his forearm.

The term "scratch her eyes out" suddenly flashed through Kelly's mind, and she discovered that she was grasping the curved edges of her chair to keep herself seated. She had never experienced such an overwhelming wave of jealousy. Kelly knew she should be thrilled that her scheme was working, but instead the sight of Adam and this woman standing so close—touching, maybe making plans for later in the evening, was very upsetting. And she knew that her feelings were more than a protective reac-

tion for Vicki's benefit. These strange new emotions raging within her were too personal. The one thing she wanted now was to get out of here so she wouldn't have to see Adam and Sue Ann together. She would fly back to Los Angeles tonight and Jack could do whatever he wanted—but she couldn't continue this case objectively.

Just as she made a move to get up, she was stunned by Adam's deep, amused voice. "You're welcome to the dryer, and you can even fold my clothes if you want to. I've promised to take my date out to dinner, and it would certainly save us a lot of time." His gaze swung around to include Kelly, whom he favored with a conspiratorial wink.

"Maybe some other time, Sugar," Sue Ann cooed, confident that her appeal was stronger than Kelly's. "I'm staying in Room 110, and you're welcome to drop by as soon as you get through doing your chores."

"Don't wait up." Adam responded, pulling away from Kelly's clinging grasp. Efficiently, he swung the stuffed pillowcase over his left shoulder and held out his right hand toward Kelly. "Let's go, finish the chores and eat some vittles. Honey Child," he said in an accurate imitation of Jed Clampett of the *Beverly Hillbillies*.

Kelly rose and moved toward him. As his arm wrapped around her shoulders, Kelly's arm automatically settled comfortably around his waist. However temporarily, he had chosen her over the very available Sue Ann. He made her feel special in a way no man ever had before. She tuned out the alarm bells that were sending out warnings she only listened to her heart, which pounded in anticipation.

CHAPTER FIVE

"I need to stop by my room for a minute to drop off these clothes and hang up my shirts. I don't want to look wrinkled next week, and ironing is one of the things I refuse to do."

"I'm sorry to hear that," declared Kelly with a teasing twinkle in her eyes. "I was going to see if I could hire you to take care of my clothes."

"I'd rather wrinkle them for you," he replied lightly, but the squeeze of his hand dropping her shoulder gave a deeper meaning to his answer. She could think of no safe response to this and knew she should put some distance between them, but she didn't. They continued along the path to the Bora Bora in companionable silence, almost oblivious to the activities that were going on around them.

Strategically located spotlights lit up the entire area with a sort of ethereal glow that was bright enough for a game of volleyball but dim enough to be romantic for strolling lovers. And there was no shortage of these as couples walked hand in hand along the small beach or loitered in a shadowy en-

ve ope of privacy neeath one of he many palm rees

No one e se was in the hallway as Kelly waited for Adam to unlock his door

Welcome to this modest little grass h t that I call home, my little Lei Lani "

What's a Lei-Lani?" she couldn't resist asking as she entered ahead of him and fumbled for a light switch

I don't have any idea but it's one of the terms I remember hearing on *Hawaii Five-O* I didn't think Book him, Dano would really set the mood that I wanted " His deep chuckle warmed the darkness until his fingers flipped on the lights Make yourself at home Have a piece of fruit, compliments of the hotel he said indicating a basket half filled with tempting-looking fruit He then motioned toward the king size bed and the two chairs beside the small round table "I don't have much to offer as far as seating arrangements go but you have first choice It won't take me long and then we can go get some dinner " His voice trailed off as he left her alone and went into the dressing area

We ate such a late lunch that I'm not really very hungry she spoke loudly enough for him to hear her over the muffled noises he was making in his closet She wandered around as she talked in an instinctive urge to find something personal of his in the nicely decorated room She didn't realize she breathed a sigh of relief when she saw no pictures of his family staring accusingly at her There was nothing but her own conscience to remind her that

she should be with him only to further her investigation, and not just because she wanted to spend a little more time with him. She tried to remember the pain Vicki's betrayal had caused her, but the rich, deep timbre of Adam's voice was slowly pushing that memory from her mind.

"How about a salad to go?" His voice was so near and so unexpected that she jumped.

She turned around. "Which restaurant do you think we should try?" She forced herself to remain where she was as she turned around to find him standing behind her so close she could reach out and touch the strong, square line of his jaw and the sensuous curve of his smiling lips. The scent of his aftershave lotion worked as a drug, making her feel vulnerable and defenseless.

Room service here is a little slow, but the food is always excellent. We wouldn't have to fight the late-night crowds." He had ordered in for us. He suggested. His words were reasonable, but he didn't hear a word of them. She was caught in the force field of his compelling blue eyes as they searched her face for an answer to his unspoken question.

There was no denying the sexual magnetism that sparked between them. Beneath the warm caress of his steady look, her body ran the full gamut of emotions from trembling and weak-kneed longing to full-blown desire. Why had Cupid sent her the man of her dreams this time, who created such a whirlpool of feelings deep within her and yet was so unforgettably negligible? Had she met him under different

circumstances it might have been easier to overlook the fact that he already belonged to someone else She remembered that her mother had always told her that not only was it wrong to date a married man but it was also stupid It is wicked cheating on his wife with her now it would cheating on her with someone else later Kelly couldn't help but resent the fact that if she hadn't known his background she would never have guessed that he was married He wore no wedding ring and certainly never mentioned his wife and the children He was setting the trap to catch her and the net he was using was more powerful than anything she had ever encountered Surely her mother had never met a man like Adam or she would have known exactly how to respond to tell him to get lost

Kelly was not told She knew that the longer she stayed here with Adam the more difficult it would be for her to leave There were too many people involved and too many loose ends to be resolved before she could even consider such things Adam right now she was much too close to think clearly With a superhuman effort she struck herself free from the enormity of his unwavering gaze

I have to go she whispered but it was strangely hoarse stepping around him she headed briskly for the front door

What But we haven't eaten

I have to go now she stated rather more firmly

What about tomorrow? Is our date for Disney World still on?"

It's not a date," she corrected frantically.

"There you go again." Adam heaved a confused sigh. "What does a man have to do to make it an official' date with you?"

He has to be single, her heart cried, but she didn't speak the words out loud. Instead she answered his other question with a deeply felt honesty. "Yes, I still want to go with you tomorrow. What time should I be ready?"

"I'll come by your room about—"

"No, my room's out of your way, so I'll just meet you in the lobby by the fountain where we met today."

"About eight o'clock? I'll even treat you to breakfast if you promise not to attack any of the plants."

"See you in the morning." Kelly answered with a small wistful smile, then left before he could offer to escort her to her room.

Her rented compact car must have known its own way back to her hotel because she was parked outside her yellow-trimmed building before she realized it. Her mind had been too crowded with self-recriminations about how stupid she had been to let herself become personally and emotionally involved with a client. Well, he was not exactly the client but rather the object of her assignment. She had been trying very hard to be professional and prove not only her own worth but also the value of female executives as a whole. And, so far in her career, she had succeeded admirably—until she met Adam.

Before she had ever set foot in San Francisco she had been predisposed not to like him. But after that

brief encounter and these last few days, especially today, she had discovered, to her dismay, that he wasn't at all like the evil womanizer she had been expecting. His unaffected charm and easy wit had completely captivated her. It had been frighteningly easy to like this man. All her prejudices had been magically transformed into a comfortable rapport that she had shared with few people. But then, what woman wouldn't be flattered by so much attention from such an attractive man?

All thoughts of a speedy return to L.A. had fled her mind. If only she could retain some semblance of common sense and decorum, she could complete this case. Perhaps the results wouldn't be what Vicki was expecting. Surely she wouldn't consider the case lost if Kelly could show, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Vicki's suspicions were completely unfounded. From now on Kelly would be working to prove Adam's innocence, rather than his guilt. She had lost her objectiveness as far as he was concerned and could not accept the idea that he could be as insensitive or disloyal as Vicki imagined. Instead she would feel proud of herself if she could reunite his family.

But a deep ache in the pit of her stomach made her wonder why such a noble goal should cause her such pain. Regardless of her personal feelings about Adam, there could be no other acceptable solution.

Listlessly, she let herself into her room with her key card and set about the task of straightening up the mess she had made earlier that afternoon when she had had to make a flying trip from the Polyne-

stan Village after lunch. She had had less than two hours to wash and dry her hair, get dressed and make the short journey back. Left to rest it was time to meet Adam for this evening's unexpected visit to the laundry room. The porter must had attempted to tidy up some of the tumble and as usual had turned back her bed covers and left her a small chocolate candy on a card printed with the message "Sweet Dreams." There was little doubt who would be starring in her dreams but couldn't predict whether they would be sweet or sad.

Her stomach reminded her that she had not eaten any dinner but it was too late to go out again and she made do with the miniature candy bar and a cola from the machine near her room. Tomorrow she would set her new plan into action and make Adam a happy husband. It was probably going to be easier to get Adam and Vicki back together than it was going to be to ignore the growing ache in her heart that her success would cause.

She spent a restless night and was prepared to reject the day's plans but Adam's cheerful mood was infectious. Before breakfast was half over Kelly had caught Disney fever. A childish excitement grew within her as the monorail slid smoothly over its endless tracks, gliding almost silently over a verdant zoo of well-groomed topiaries.

As the bullet shaped car eased to a stop in front of Mickey Mouse's smiling face formed from colorfully blooming flowers, Adam took a firm grip on her elbow to protect her from the jostling crowd that moved from the monorail to the gates. But instead

of joining the long line at the entrance turnstiles, he propelled her around to a private entrance labeled guest pass gate. He presented a small gold card at the window and was greeted with a special smile from the pretty park hostess, who immediately admitted him and Kelly into the park.

"I'd be glad to escort you and your friend on a private tour of Walt Disney World," the young woman offered, her eyes leaving Adam's face only long enough for a cursory glance at Kelly.

"No, thanks. We wouldn't want to take you away from the other guests," he refused as tactfully as possible.

"It would be no trouble," she persisted. "It's my job to give personalized attention to our special guests."

In response to her offer Adam bent over and whispered something in the hostess's ear that caused her to blush and beat a hasty retreat.

"What on earth did you tell that poor girl?" Kelly asked, relieved that there wouldn't be an extra person tagging along.

"I simply explained that we were on our honeymoon and that we were more interested in making love than meeting Mickey Mouse, and we definitely could manage that without help."

"You didn't!" Kelly gasped.

"It worked, didn't it? We're all alone, aren't we, darling?" He grinned as he emphasized the term of affection and reached out for her hand.

"Just you and me and forty thousand others, sweetheart," she answered with a caustic endear-

ment. She was trying to remember her vow of neutrality, but he was making it very difficult. Besides, there was probably some law against being too serious while visiting Disney World. She should let go and enjoy herself; she decided as her hand fit perfectly in the possessive curve of his much larger one. After all, it was only for one day.

Let me take my shy little bride who will not even let me take her on a date on a very personalized tour of the World, precious," he offered, a twinkle lighting his clear blue eyes.

"Lead the way, dearest. I'm putting my trust in you for a safe return to the real world."

"That's a really depressing thought," he said, groaning. As they neared the end of Main Street he commented in a conspiratorial whisper. "The majority of the crowd will turn right, so if we go left we should miss the crush."

"How do you know so much about this place?" her curiosity forced her to ask.

"Oh, that's easy. I used to be Dopey for a while, but then I became Goofy."

"Well, that's certainly ambitious. I always wanted to be someone famous too."

"No, seriously. I used to work at Disneyland when I was a kid. I was Dopey the dwarf one summer, but then I had a spurt of growth, so the next summer I fit into the Goofy costume. I quite literally grew up there. My family lived very close to Disneyland, and the more often I visited it, the more I became fascinated by what made everything work. I wasn't satisfied just knowing about the things that

everyone else saw. I wanted to see behind the scenes. Soon I got to know the technicians so well that it became like a second home to me. You might say that Donald Duck was my surrogate uncle.

"That would make Huey, Dewey, and Louie your cousins," Kelly said, picking up the thread of his story and teasing him.

"I guess I'm lucky Uncle Donald wasn't a turkey," he squawked in a raspy Donald Duck voice.

"You're very good with voices. Maybe you missed your calling and should have been a mockingbird."

"I've always had an aptitude for mimicry," he answered as they followed the slowly moving line entering the Pirates of the Caribbean ride. "Being able to reproduce voices and movements is a vital part of my job. In audio-animatronics, the main goal is to recreate a person or an animal with total accuracy down to the split-second blink of their eyes. It's the perfect union of computers and animation to form an optical illusion so that the viewer forgets that what he's seeing isn't real."

He continued to explain about such mysteries as synchronization and three-dimensional caricatures as their waterjet-powered boat slid silently through the semi-darkness. They passed like spies between a life-size pirate galleon and a fort. From the volley of cannon fire blasting across them, complete with "cannonballs" splashing nearby, to the coyish primping of a scarlet woman being sold on the auction block, to the realistic cackle and scratching of a flock of hens, braying of a donkey, and staggering of drunk

on pigs in the streets of the make-believe village Kelly was completely fascinated by everything she saw. When flames darted across the night darkened sky with crackling fury, threatening to destroy the make-believe village, Kelly was overwhelmed by the dazzling elaborate period costumes and characters whose facial movements were so realistic that they actually appeared to be mouthing complex phrases that shouted from hidden speakers. It was a journey into another world, another time, and Kelly did not want to leave the cavelike structure. Just as she wanted to savor it again.

"No repeats yet," Adam said firmly, smiling like a father who has given his child her first taste of candy. "It is impossible to see everything in Disney World in just one day, so we're going to just have to hit the high spots. There's a lot more to see and do, and we have to keep moving."

And they did. They were whisked to Africa, where a jungle cruise boat wound through various settings such as the Congo, Southeast Asian village, the Nile River, and a real Amazon rain forest. Lively looking animals roamed next to the river among an incredible concentration of subtropical plants. The boat captain's heroic skill and humorous speech kept them from getting eaten by vicious alligators, hostile natives, and a herd of elephants that were bathing under a waterfall.

Next Adam and Kelly briefly browsed through the ultimate mansion of tree houses, one that was similar to the Swiss Family Robinson's. No one seemed to care that the roots were concrete or that

the eight hundred thousand leaves and flowers were tiny as they wandered through the different exhibits.

At the Tropical Serenade which Adam informed her was the first Audio-Animatronics attraction presented at Disneyland in 1963 and had led the way for future developments, over two hundred and fifty beautifully plumed tropical birds and flowers talked, sang and whistled their way into the audience's hearts. After a visit to the Country Bear Jamboree where can can dancers, furry comedians and wild and wooly musicians performed with energetic zeal, Kelly screamed her way through the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad roller coaster ride which wound its way through and around a recreation of Monument Valley, Utah. The railway cars went so fast, swooping and turning so often, that she had to take Adam's word that they had passed through a ghost town. He informed her that the seventeen million dollars it cost to build this one ride was approximately as much as it had cost to build Disneyland in California in 1955.

The Haunted Mansion quickly became one of Kelly's favorite rides with nine hundred and ninety-nine playful ghosts and spooky apparitions that danced, sang and popped up at the most unexpected moments.

Adam amused at her reactions and proud of her interest in his work, continued to explain the intricacies involved. With a chuckle he told her that the Haunted Mansion was the one attraction that maintenance crews did not have to worry about keeping clean. In fact, they periodically spread a new layer

of dust (which had to be imported from the West Coast) throughout the interior of the house and strung up artificial cobwebs. Through the years since the park opened in 1971, enough dust had been used to bury the whole structure.

On their way to a restaurant for lunch, Adam and Kelly paused for a moment under the heavy branches of a real live oak tree that stood majestically in the middle of Liberty Square.

"This is called the Liberty Tree and is over one hundred and thirty years old."

"That's almost as old as my feet feel right now," Kelly quipped.

"You interrupted my story," Adam reprimanded with pretended sternness.

"Oops, sorry Professor Davis. I was just so surprised to see something that is honest-to-goodness real that I couldn't keep quiet. Please continue," she apologized with mock gravity.

"Okay, if you insist," he answered, his crooked grin pushing away any signs of pretended gruffness. "Anyway, this tree was growing on the southern edge of the property, but was so magnificent that they didn't want to destroy it. Since it's no small job to move a thirty-five-ton tree without killing it, you can imagine how difficult it was. They had to drill holes horizontally through the trunk, then a huge crane lifted it by the rods that were inserted through it. After it was relocated, it almost died from some sort of wood disease they cured by cementing in the holes. Then they grafted a young tree to the base to hide the damage done to the oak's trunk."

"That's very interesting Teacher but when do we get to go to lunch?" she asked in a little-girl voice

"It's so true about teachers being underpaid and underappreciated," he said in a resigned tone as he led the way to the Liberty Tree Tavern

"I'm much more appreciative on a full stomach" She smiled up at him

After they ordered Adam watched Kelly examine the Americana effect of the picturesque restaurant "So, how do you like everything so far?" he couldn't resist asking watching her reaction closely

She didn't disappoint him as she answered with a genuine enthusiasm "I love it I feel like Alice in Wonderland stepping through the looking glass There's so much to see that it would have taken me several visits to know what to look for and where to find it"

"It's because you have a great guide," he added immodestly then fell into a Humphrey Bogart accent "Stick with me sweetheart and I'll show you the ropes"

"I've already seen the ropes I want you to show me the world" she said, laughing

"How can I show you the world when you won't even let me take you on a real date?"

"I just can't," she murmured shaking her head

"Oh I forgot about the friend that's meeting you here this week Are you engaged to this guy?" A very upsetting idea abruptly occurred to him Everything had been happening so quickly that it hadn't even occurred to him to ask before now "Or are you married?" Adam held his breath waiting for her answer

No, I'm not married or engaged," she replied a bit too quickly, unable to resist the slight emphasis on the I. "Actually I told you a little fib when I said someone would be missing me later." She blurted out a sudden burst of honesty before hastily adding, "A woman traveling alone can never be too careful, you know." Courtesy she felt better, but he didn't think she was involved with someone. Actually it was sort of ironic that he should ask such a question considering what she knew about his own marital status, but no, he couldn't be totally honest with her, but then, she wouldn't be here today if he had been.

But it was impossible to stay mad at him for very long. She had never met anyone who had as much personality or was as easy to get along with. She knew that when the details of today were long forgotten, she would always remember a collage of colorful flowers, happy music, and Adam. After lunch they were both in a playful mood as they wandered through the little shops, stopping often to examine the merchandise, each trying to outdo the other in making up odd uses for the more bizarre items. But their only purchase was a large stuffed Bambi.

"Here's a deer for my dear bride. I've been told that we share more than a passing resemblance," he teased, holding Bambi's head next to his face and opening his blue eyes in a wide innocent imitation of the deer's big brown ones. Fluttering his thick dark eyelashes dramatically, he waited for her response.

"Yes, I see it," she said, cocking her head to one

side "Especially the large pointed ears and shiny wet nose."

"Thanks a lot." He acted as if he were returning to the shop. "I think I'll trade him in for a Prince Charming doll and we can start this conversation over."

She stopped him with her laughter and he hardened the animation in her with a flash. "I would have bought you a cuddly doll but I'd prefer you think of me as a deer rather than a trick-or-treat dog."

He would never know how close to the truth his statement had been. At the start of this assignment she had thought of him as a dog of the worst variety but her feelings had undergone a drastic change. And now, regardless of her original misgivings, she was certain that she would never forget him.

As they walked their bodies moved together naturally, his arm across her shoulders pulling her against his side. It occurred to her to object but she didn't listen. She felt as if she had an angel whispering in one ear and the devil whispering in the other. As she enjoyed the exciting sensation of Adam's firm muscular body moving against hers she unconsciously decided to ignore the angel for the rest of the day. The devil's suggestions were much more enticing.

He took her through Fantasyland, pointing out the highlights among the hundreds of moving dolls all appropriately dressed according to their nationality and singing the words of a song that branded itself in her mind for days. The "It's a Small World" exhibit was audio-animatronics at its adorable best.

Most of the other rides in this section were for the youngsters, so Kelly and Adam went on to Cinderella's castle.

"This castle is taller than Sleeping Beauty's at Disneyland," Adam explained as Kelly craned her neck back to gaze up at the tall, graceful spires that seemed to pierce the cotton-candy clouds in a magical sky.

It was modeled after the Bavarian palace of Mad King Ludwig and is considered to be a good example of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Renaissance architecture. Actually, it is the center of the Magic Kingdom and contains the entrances for the underground network of corridors that allow the performers and employees total access to the other areas of the park. They also keep all the costumes down there," Adam said, continuing his self-appointed task as a tour guide.

"These murals must have taken years of work," Kelly exclaimed in awe as she studied the hundreds of colorful glass mosaics that were pieced together to tell the story of Cinderella and her wicked stepfamily inside the elaborate castle.

"I'm sure it did. That's hand-cut Italian glass, and some of them are fused with fourteen-carat gold and real silver."

"They don't do anything halfway around here, do they?"

"No, and that's why they hired me."

"Mr. Humility himself, aren't you!"

"I'm really just a shy guy, except where my work is concerned," he admitted, only half joking.

"What exactly are you working on right now? Everything looks pretty perfect to me."

"I've had some projects at Disney World before but this time I'm helping out at Epcot. They're adding on to their space display and I'm helping them design it. We're going to have a section that people ride through that will make them believe they're on the moon's surfaces complete with a lunar module and astronauts bounding about weightlessly. I want it to be so realistic that people will hold on to their seats to keep from floating away. I'll show you what I mean when I take you to Epcot next week. Now that your friend won't be arriving to claim your attention I'll have you all to myself."

She didn't comment but a shiver of anticipation flashed through her. She refused to think ahead to next week. Today was a special day and not likely to be repeated.

To escape the heat of the afternoon they took welcomed refuge in the comfortable air-conditioned Hall of Presidents. After a film about the Constitution the curtain went up revealing every president from George Washington to Ronald Reagan, standing or sitting in a large group on the stage. It was eerie to hear the roll call with each man nodding when his name was announced while the others watched, whispered to each other and fidgeted just as real people would do. Each president was dressed in clothes that were accurate not only in the style of his period but in the fabrics and tailoring techniques of the time. It was all very stirring and patriotic but the real thrills began to happen in Tomorrowland.

Never had the potential of this space before Adam maneuvered slowly settled on the seat of the Space Mountain ride. It was the only ride that had a bench seat so side by side rather than one behind the other. Kelly would sit directly in front of her between his long legs. He settled her firmly against him and every damaged she had she couldn't ease up her enough not to be aware of the muscle and her and her

As the ride picked up speed streaking through the darkness Kelly barely noticed the meteors that appeared to whiz by or the streaking stars that flashed. Instead, with each jolt and turn that shifted her body she became more and more aware of the very real man in whose lap she was sitting. It was a natural response for him to wrap his arms around her to steady her for the remainder of the trip.

As they passed through the last tunnel and began to slow down she felt the warm brush of his breath against her neck. At first she thought she had imagined it, but when she felt it the second time she turned her head to tell him to stop. But the words never materialized as his warm sensuous mouth took possession of hers. Instead of a denial his name escaped her lips in a breathless plea for him to continue. He kissed her as she had always wanted to be kissed with a sweetness laced with passion. Cool coils intermingled with a hot lust as her body responded with an honesty that no amount of resolve could control.

"I've been wanting to do this all day," he murmured against her cheek as the rocket car slid

around the first turn. His arm was as taut as he could make it as possible, straining to gently guide the reins while he tested, measured and tested.

All too soon the thoughts of the ride came to a pause at the end of the paddock and he was forced to struggle to return to normal. Overcoming a desire to lean back and open the feel of his horse's body between herself to sit up straight.

I never realized this ride could be so satisfying. He whispered softly in her ear as they walked past a display of enormous flowers. Conversations of the future.

Once outside the setting sun blazed a red pattern against the evening sky. For several seconds they just stood there, each other, neither knowing what to say or where to go from here.

I'll make an exception. I would want to repeat this ride now. At last Acer broke the silence with a suggestive smile, letting her and he was waiting for her to make the next move. He was going to follow her to set the pace and despite the urges from screams Kelly wanted to call.

CHAPTER SIX

Regardless of the advertising claims, there is a limit to the amount and type of fun a person can have at Disney World. Kelly felt grimy enough that they had snatched a kiss in the dark like a couple of school kids, but it was even worse that she had enjoyed it so much. She was sure that Walt Disney had wanted his guests to have a good time, but she didn't think making out on the rides was included on the average agenda.

"The ride wasn't at all what I had expected. Maybe we had better wait a while before trying it again. I don't know if I can stand that much excitement so soon." Kelly finally responded. She hoped he would treat it as a rejection into the double entendre but instead would recognize it as a bid for time. There were many more things to be considered than just the two of them.

"I could have sworn that you enjoyed it as much as I did." His vivid blue eyes told her that he didn't understand her hesitation, but instead of pursuing the point, he asked, "They had some terrific special

effects in there, didn't they?"

"What special effects?"

"The shooting stars, the flashing lights and the flying meteors," he answered.

"You mean those were part of the ride?" She pretended surprise, then let her mouth relax into a softly intimate smile. "I thought I was seeing them because of you."

"Well, I saw them too," he murmured huskily. One of his large hands reached out to gently cup her cheek and jawbone. Automatically she leaned against the pressure, then turned her head just enough to kiss his palm. "I've heard that some people hear bells and see fireworks, but we saw stars and meteors."

"We were in Tomorrowland. What else would you expect?"

"Maybe that will prove to be prophetic," he mused.

"Maybe" was as much as she could commit herself to.

The rest of the evening was spent catching up on the attractions that they had missed earlier and eating a leisurely dinner in Cinderella's Castle at King Stefan's Banquet Hall.

"I definitely feel underdressed," Kelly whispered to Adam as they waited to be seated by a lady who looked as if she had just stepped out of Camelot.

A sweeping glance of Kelly's shapely figure, shown to its best advantage in a pale mint green terry jumper, brought about Adam's comment. "One look at you and those knights will be tearing off their

armor to get cooler."

[illegible] I don't know if I can handle the sight of naked knights," her eyes twinkled in delight at their reparte. Adam had a way of making people never let her feel out of place because as long as he accepted her as she was, nothing else was important.

The restaurant was located at parque de ve inside the castle and was reached by a winding curving staircase. Even though the castle was made of fiberglass and steel instead of granite the overall effect was nonetheless realistic. The Disney coat of arms was prominently displayed outside on the north wall while several Disney executives and hosts hanging in the spacious waiting hall just inside the entrance of the restaurant.

The Disney suite and [illegible] partment [illegible] farther up in the castle but I don't think I've ever [illegible]ved an r," Adam commented between courses.

"I can't imagine anyone turning down the opportunity to live in a castle, especially here where there's so much going on all the time."

"You don't have to live in a castle to live happily ever after."

"[illegible] Cinderella. She certainly landed on her feet."

"That's because she recognized Prince Charming when she saw him. How's your eyesight?" he quipped, one dark eyebrow arching flirtatiously.

"Good enough to recognize The Big Bad Wolf when I see him!"

Later Kelly relaxed against the warm comfort of

Adam's body as they lounged together on a park bench watching a spectacular fireworks display light up the black velvet sky. Like a magical illusion, the slender towers and delicate spires of Cinderella's Castle seemed to glow in a kaleidoscopic finale to a day that had been a delightful assault on all five natural senses.

Gloriously tired, Kelly and Adam waited their turn with the rest of the crowd as the monorails faithfully made their rounds.

"It's too bad your little gold card doesn't give you any preferential treatment to make these lines disappear." Kelly had noticed that any purchase he had made today had been made with that mysterious card.

"It's not magic, just a sort of American Express card Disney World-style. You might say it's a fringe benefit from working for a company who makes fantasy a reality," he explained. "I was hoping it would impress you."

"I'm suitably impressed, but it doesn't have anything to do with your card," she murmured, laying her head on his shoulder, enjoying the feel of his hand lightly stroking her hair.

Back at his hotel she faced the same old dilemma but with a new twist. She and Adam had graduated to a different stage in their relationship. They had quickly become friends, but after today it would be increasingly difficult to deny the attraction they felt for each other. It would be easy enough to satisfy it physically, but emotionally neither wanted to harm the bond of warmth and understanding that

had been forged. They were afraid that if they let this night end, so would the magical spell that had been cast over them, turning them into young, carefree lovers.

"Which room is yours?" he asked as they walked hand in hand beneath the gently fluttering palm trees.

"My room's a mess. Let's go to yours," she suggested, then blushed at the boldness of the implication. "I didn't mean that the way it sounded," she added hastily.

"It sounded good to me. But since you're going to be a spoilsport, let's walk down to the beach for a moment."

Moments later Kelly eagerly took off her shoes and let the sand massage her tired feet. Still holding the day's heat, it was a pleasant contradiction to the soft, almost cool breeze off the lagoon. Since one arm was filled with Bambi and the other with Adam, he graciously offered to carry her shoes while they enjoyed the peaceful sound of the water lapping gently against the silver shore. The exotic fragrance of flowers hung heavy in the air, and the sight of the castle in the distance, silhouetted against a blue-black sky, added to the illusion of unreality. How could a person be held responsible for what might happen on a night like this?

Their steps slowed, then stopped as if they had reached an invisible mark in the powdery sand. Her shoes dropped to the sand as Adam's hands cupped her shoulders, turning her to face him. Sensitive fingers threaded into the thickness of her silky brown

hair cupping her head and gently asking her to meet him halfway

She needed no encouragement for she wanted him more than she had ever wanted anything in her entire life. Nothing mattered as long as she could taste his lips and feel his body melt against hers. She would have to make this one time last a lifetime after she and Adam went their separate ways. Ardently she pressed against him, her arms finding their way around his neck until the back of Bambi pushed its way over his shoulder.

"Drop that stupid deer," Adam ordered.

"But he'll get sandy," she protested.

"I'll send him to the cleaners." And as Bambi hit the dust, Adam's mouth met hers in a kiss filled with passion and promise. His lips moved over hers, savoring their sweet softness, pulling a response from her that sent delightful tingles shooting all the way down to the core of her. Warmth radiated from a fire he had set and which only he could extinguish. Her bare toes curled into the soft sand, seeking an anchor to hold her down to earth.

Almost lazily his mouth left hers and trailed across the hollow of her cheek to the delicate lobe of her ear. His hand lifted the weight of her long hair so that the heat of his kisses could brand a trail along the curve of her neck. Kelly responded with a moan, tilting her head to give him better access. His other hand slid under her blouse until it rested against the bare skin at the small of her back. Sensuously his fingers massaged and caressed her body just above the waistband of her shorts while his lips recaptured

hers more demanding this time.

"Stay with me tonight," he pleaded, his mouth never relinquishing its possession of hers. But before she could answer, the muted sound of another couple approaching along the beach penetrated their passion-heightened senses. Reluctantly Kelly pulled herself away to put a more decent distance between them until the intruders were past, and she and Adam would be alone again to pick up where they had left off.

"Remember the beautiful fireworks you were talking about earlier?" Adam asked, his voice oddly strained. At her mute nod he continued. "Well, it sort of looks like Notre Dame around here, and I haven't seen so many fireworks since the closing ceremonies at the Olympics in Los Angeles."

A shiver of delight shook her when she realized that he had shared the raging desire that left her clinging to him weakly. But the feelings were still too fragile to discuss, so she chose a safer subject. "Yes, the fireworks at the Olympics really were incredible. Were you able to go to any of the events?"

"Almost all of them. I'm partial to the track events, my friend Mark wanted to see the boxing, and swimming, and Vicki insisted that we attend all of the gymnastic competitions."

An ice-cold shower of reality washed over Kelly. There was no other single word Adam could have said that could so effectively dissolve her passion. At last he had brought up Vicki's name, but his nonchalance appalled her. Some perversity made her echo hollowly, "Vicki?"

"Sure. Haven't I mentioned her to you before? She's my—"

No force on earth could have made Kelly stay in that spot and hear him discuss his wife with the same breath that had just mixed with her own. Before he could finish his casual confession, she turned and ran. Guilt and humiliation gave wings to her bare feet as they flew over the pebbled sidewalk past the longhouses, and through an outside exit to the parking lot. Thank goodness her purse's strap had not slipped off her shoulder during that moment of insanity on the beach. Frantically she dug through the small purse until she found her car keys and could complete her escape. It wasn't until she had locked herself in her hotel room that she realized she had forgotten her shoes and abandoned Bambi in her haste. At least she hadn't also left behind her pride. She had come so close to throwing away her inhibitions and spending the night with Adam. Tears that had filled her eyes on the drive home could no longer be held back and flowed down her cheeks and onto the flowered bedspread. Tears of relief or tears of sadness for what could have been? They both hurt just the same.

For a minute Adam had been too startled to react. Automatically he grabbed up her shoes and the stuffed animal before sprinting after Kelly who was already out of sight behind a building. By the time he reached the courtyard there was no sign of her in any direction and he hesitated, confused and frustrated. The sound of a patio door sliding shut behind him caused him to whirl around and practically at-

tack the closed portal. Positive that she was in there he pounded until a very upset occupant pulled the door open and confronted him angrily.

Adam stared blankly at the unfamiliar face of the elderly man.

"Do you have any idea what time it is, young man?"

Adam shook his head.

"It's after midnight. I don't know what's going on out here but all the racket is keeping me and my wife awake."

"I'm sorry to bother you. I must have the wrong room." Adam murmured apologetically and hurried backed away. Kelly was nowhere in sight and he didn't have any idea what her room number was. The desk clerk! He would find out from him what room she was in.

But the desk clerk was no help at all. He checked twice and pocketed a twenty-dollar bill before he told Adam that there was no one registered at the hotel with the last name of McClain. Although he remembered seeing an attractive young woman that matched Adam's description of Kelly, the clerk had no idea who or where she was.

Defeated, Adam turned away. As he stood there in the middle of the chartreuse and turquoise checkerboard tile floor of the Great Ceremonial House, he began to notice that several people were staring at him curiously. It dawned on him that he must be a strange sight, standing alone with a pair of women's sandals dangling from one hand and a large sandy Bambi clutched in the other. Straighten

ing his back. his long, loose strides carried him across the lobby, away from the prying eyes, and to the haven of his room.

He needed time to think. How quickly Kelly had entered his life and then, just as suddenly, had disappeared without a trace. If it weren't for her sandals sitting on his dresser, he might suspect that she never had existed at all. The symbolism of tonight was not wasted on Adam, who enjoyed the imagination and complexities of fairy tales. Just like Prince Charming at the ball, he had been deserted at the stroke of midnight by Cinderella, left with some frustrating memories and a pair of shoes that, in this case, were leather instead of glass. He didn't know where she lived, where she was staying, even why she was here. And he didn't have a clue as to how he could find her. Too bad he couldn't go around trying to fit her shoe on the perfect foot as the prince did in the story.

Adam was surprised at how very important it was that he find her. He had been attracted by her beauty, but the more he got to know her, the better he liked her, and that couldn't be said for most of the women he knew. His and Kelly's personalities had matched like the cogs of a well-oiled machine, fitting together smoothly and comfortably. He liked her, he desired her, and after being with her he wouldn't be satisfied with anything less. But where was she right now?

Kelly "Cinderella" McClain was standing under the pounding stream of a hot shower, trying to ex-

or use the ghosts that haunted her. The angel had won the battle, and Kelly had decided that she would never see Adam again. And at that moment she really meant it.

However two days later she still had not called Jack to tell him she was off the case, nor had she used her return ticket to Los Angeles. Instead she had lounged around one of the Hyatt's swimming pools, reading, but not comprehending, several paperback books. A heavy lethargy had drained her energy, keeping her from acting on any of her good intentions. Hour after hour she sat trying not to think about the one thing that insisted on dominating her thoughts, Adam Davis, the most fascinating, exciting, charmingly funny man she had ever met. It would be easy to allow herself to dream of letting their relationship develop into something possibly permanent. But always in the back of her mind would be the reminder that he was already very much married, and even though he didn't seem to mind not knowing about his wife and didn't seem to place any value on the marriage, Kelly could

Wednesday morning, the third day after her hasty retreat, Kelly was seated in the Papeete Bay Verandah restaurant at the Polynesian Village waiting to be served breakfast, but more importantly, waiting for Adam. This was where they had shared so many mornings together, some at the same table and some watching each other as covertly as possible with the width of the room between them. As the moments passed and there was no sign of him, she began to lose her nerve. Ignoring her untouched food, which

had just been set before her she rose stiffly from her chair and turned to leave But she had taken no more than a few steps forward when she was abruptly halted as she collided with the warm solid body of a man Before her eyes lifted to his face she knew by the familiar masculine scent and the grip of his strong hands on her arms who he was

"Kelly!" Her name was wrenched from the depths of his heart telling her all that she wanted to hear

"Adam " she whispered suddenly breathless Her eyes sparkled with unshed tears as she looked into the face that she had thought she might never see again.

"I've been looking for you everywhere I had begun to think that you were just a figment of my imagination."

"I panicked she admitted "It was all happening too fast and I couldn't think clearly

"You don't have anything to be afraid of, Kelly Whatever your problem is we can work it out together"

"I'm not so sure"

"But you came back, anyway"

"Yes, I came back anyway"

And I'm not letting you go again" He propelled her to a table near the window overlooking the Seven Seas Lagoon "I'm at a point in my work when I can afford to take a few days off You've made me afraid to let you out of my sight for even a minute There's so much I want to show you and experience with you I missed seeing your gorgeous face every morning across a crowded restaurant"

"Not gorgeous," she protested, feeling both flattered and suddenly shy.

"Gorgeous is in the eye of the beholder, and that's what my eyes see when I look at you," he replied softly. Picking up her hand, he tenderly pressed it against his lips before rubbing her knuckles over his smoothly shaven cheek.

The simplicity of the gesture and the sincerity of his words touched her deeply, making her want to laugh and cry at the same time. "What am I going to do with you?" she whispered, almost to herself.

"I have several suggestions," he answered, flashing a grin as his irrepressible humor returned. "But first I want to show you where I've been working for the last few weeks and what I do for a living. Do you need to go to your room for anything?"

"I have a confession to make about my room," she blurted out, tired of trying to work around that awkward situation. "When I decided to visit this area I had my heart set on staying at the Polynesian Village. You can imagine my disappointment when I found out there were no vacancies, so I'm sleeping at the Hyatt Orlando but enjoying the pleasant amenities offered here."

"No wonder I couldn't find you," he exclaimed. "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"I just felt so silly hanging out here."

"I happen to know of a room right here in the Village that has a king size bed that is much too large for just one person. I don't suppose you would consider . . ."

"A tempting offer, but no." She smiled and shook

her head. "I guess I'm a little old fashioned and there are still a few things that have to be worked out first."

"When you're ready, just whistle. You do know how to whistle, don't you? You just put your lips together and blow."

"You do a terrible Lauren Bacall. And I've got some more bad news. I never learned how to whistle."

"I've taught some of my plastic figures to whistle with a computer. Surely it shouldn't take long to teach YOU. I can't help believing that we could whistle a happy tune together."

She had to admit that she had never been happier than when she was with Adam. Later he took her to Epcot, and after arranging for his absence from work, he proudly showed her around the underground corridors, called "utilidors," that contained the vital operations such as the workshops, computers, and other equipment that kept the community above ground running smoothly.

Epcot Center was not just another amusement park; rather, it was an effective but subtle, combination of education and entertainment. Walt Disney had envisioned a futuristic community that would be a representation of American imagination and ingenuity and would always have room for growth as new ideas developed. Epcot was spread over two hundred and fifty acres and was divided into two very different themes. Future World consisted of examples of past achievements and dreams for tomorrow in the subjects of energy, communications, trans-

portation technology imagination agriculture and manufacture. Each was displayed in a separate building and sponsored by major corporations that occasionally threw in a little commercialism that didn't detract from the overall effect.

Then there was the World Showcase that recreated in exact, but sometimes miniaturized detail the architecture and famous landmarks of several countries around the world. It was a condensed tour that introduced the guests to the customs, cultures, arts, crafts, and authentic cuisine of almost a dozen different nations. It was incredible that such perfect mini-towns could be created in such a limited space. Some provided live shows, movies, rides, and other entertainment, and all contained restaurants and several shops in which to spend some time and money. Each item in the shops had been made in the country it represented, which added a genuine touch. This section was a sort of perpetual world's fair which would continue to add countries to its exhibit each year.

After visiting many of the exhibits, Kelly could sense Adam's excitement as he led her into the American Adventure pavilion, a large stately mansion where they saw a twenty-nine-minute film that combined movies, still photographs, and an amazing variety of more than thirty figures including Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Graham Bell, Susan B. Anthony, Franklin Roosevelt, and Benjamin Franklin, the last of whom performed the most difficult task ever programmed into any figure, he walked up a flight of stairs. Adam explained that the astronaut figures

he was designing would be even more complex because they would climb out of the lunar module and leap around on the simulated surface of the moon.

Darkness brought an attitude of romance to the entire center. Even an anti-romantic would have had a difficult time not being enchanted by strategically located lights that illuminated such striking international landmarks as the five-story pagoda in Japan, a towering Mayan pyramid in Mexico, or a three-tiered round temple styled after the Temple of Heaven in China.

Adam and Kelly enjoyed an intimate dinner in Alfredo's, a version of a famous restaurant in Italy where celebrities ate excellent pasta with golden forks. This Alfredo's was not quite so fancy. Its inside walls covered with trompe l'oeil paintings that tricked the diners' eyes into believing they were seeing people and landscapes that weren't really there. The reproductions of St. Mark's Square, a gondola-lined canal, and a piazza complete with a sea god and dolphins spouting water into a fountain outside made it easy to forget that they were not really in Italy.

"Here's a penny. We can't leave here without throwing it in and making a wish." Adam handed her a coin.

Kelly closed her eyes as she tossed her offering into the fountain, making a wish to the sea gods for a treasure she knew she could never have.

Later they walked hand in hand through the shops that lined High Street, Tudor Lane, and Upper and Lower Regency streets in the United Kingdom.

and sneaked kisses on the semisecluded lookout point by the thirty-foot waterfall while waiting for the Circle Vision movie to begin in Canada. They scurried over the cobblestones in Germany and stopped to admire the clocks, the handmade music boxes, the toys that were for sale, and to watch a demonstration of artists painting the charming ceramic figures in the Goebel Hummel shop. A glass of wine sipped under a bright red umbrella at a sidewalk cafe with the eerie sight of the Eiffel Tower silhouetted against the Florida sky was the perfect ending for a wonderful day.

And Adam didn't push her beyond that. Even though he offered to drive her to her hotel, Kerry declined and returned to the Hyatt alone. Except for his marital status, she was happy with the present situation. Most of the men she had met since college hadn't wanted to take the time to get to know her before jumping into bed. Then they became angry and hostile when she refused. But Adam was different. He seemed to be interested in her inner mechanics, just as he had been in Disneyland. It was a pleasant change to be appreciated for her personal self and not just her feminine body.

And Adam continued to be full of surprises.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Adam showed remarkable sensitivity and restraint by not pressing Kelly for any further explanations about her sometimes unusual behavior. He knew that whatever conflict raged within her had not been wholly resolved, but since he felt that their relationship was worth the wait, he denied his own personal desires until he could be sure that she had no further doubts. Besides, he hadn't told her everything about himself, either. There would be time for total honesty later.

But for now he could be satisfied with just being with her. For the next few days they became dedicated tourists, taking in all the sights and attractions this part of Florida had to offer. Thursday they went to Sea World, an exceptional exhibit of marine animals and fish. First they took a ride up the four hundred foot Sky Tower to get their perspective on the large park. They were awed by the immensity of the fifteen-million-dollar killer whale research, breeding, and display facility, where they later watched an interesting and educational show starring the beautiful

black and white Sumatra two other killer whales and several bottle-nosed dolphins.

It was a unique experience for Kelly to walk through a clear underground tunnel with sharks swimming above and alongside them in the Shark Encounter and to feed big ugly stingrays fresh fish from her hand. Both she and Adam enjoyed the seal and otter show at which luckily they had arrived fifteen minutes early. One of the few human performers at Sea World was a very talented and creative mime named Jim who greeted newcomers with hilarious antics sometimes in front of them but often behind them. His zany mimicry was one of the highlights of the day.

That evening in a change of pace Adam took Kelly to dinner at one of the most elegant and expensive restaurants in the Disney complex. The Empress Room was located on the Promenade Deck of a gloriously decorated triple-decked riverboat named the *Empress Lilly* after Walt Disney's wife. Thousands of tiny white lights twinkled and glittered reflecting off the bright polished brass and warm mahogany. Victorian elegance was evident in the wide staircases, etched glass, velvet accents, and gingerbread trim. The dining room was lined with ornate moldings that were covered with gold leaf and lit by a huge brass chandelier heavy with sparkling crystals. Adam cajoled Kelly into trying the chilled avocado soup and oyster-stuffed veal chops, which they enjoyed while listening to the delicate background melodies of a harp that didn't intrude on their hushed intimate conversation.

Much later that evening, as they were driving home, Adam insisted "You have to admit that this is a date I picked you up took you out to dinner on a riverboat then dancing at Rosie O'Grady's and now I'm taking you back to your hotel room You can call it whatever you want but in my book it's an honest-to-goodness date"

"Why is it so important for me to admit that?" Kelly asked, still reluctant to acknowledge that she was dating a married man

"Because I've never had so much trouble talking a woman into going out with me officially And I'm just curious why you're so hung up on the actual phraseology Did you have a bad experience in college that made you take a vow of solitude?"

"Of course not It's just that the term 'dating' is so high-school I prefer to think that I've outgrown that"

"What term would you prefer? Courting? Wooing? Making love?" His tone had gradually lowered to a suggestive timbre that vibrated across the darkness caressing Kelly with its warmth

She preferred the latter term but being the conservative creature that she was she hedged "Okay so we went on a date And I enjoyed it Are you happy now?"

"Yes I am," he replied honestly, reaching out to capture her hand "I'm very happy" But they had moved only a few feet before he had to relinquish his hold to downshift the car's transmission "I wish this car had a bench seat so you could slide over here closer to me"

"I just wish this car had some padding or seat covers" she responded wryly afraid to shift to a more comfortable position because the threadbare seats might snag her dress

"This car is a collector's item" Adam stood loyally defending the vehicle

"You should have rented a car from the same agency I did Even their employees were younger than this antique"

"I didn't rent this baby He patted the worn dusty dashboard affectionately An old college buddy of mine lives in Orlando and offered to loan her to me for as long as I'm staying here"

The ancient Volkswagen Beetle surged and sputtered its way into the parking area outside her building

"Are you absolutely certain this guy is a *friend* of yours?" Kelly choked with laughter at the strange looks they were getting from other guests that were wandering around the hotel's extensive grounds Dressed up in their best finery for their night on the town she and Adam did look a little incongruous stepping gingerly out of the faded orange vehicle

"I used to own a car almost like this one when I was in college It brings back a lot of good memories"

"I've only ridden in it for a day, and I already have memories" Kelly teased examining the back of her legs for runs in her stockings

"I can think of better ways to make memories" he whispered in her ear as his arm circled her slim

waist pulling her against his side as they walked toward her room

There was no doubt what he meant but his tone told her that he was not pushing just testing the water When she hesitated he quickly added Or we could sit around reminiscing about cars we have known"

Although she offered to call room service for some coffee Adam didn't stay long Much too soon he left her standing in the hotel doorway drugged by a deep intensely passionate kiss that brought to mind all sorts of protests against his early departure But before she could voice her response she heard the roar of the VW's engine coming back to life and Adam was gone

Why couldn't she forget her morals and let her passions sweep her away? This was the twentieth century Infidelity happened all the time The woman was always so overcome with desire that she suffered temporary amnesia concerning her own or her lover's family ties and never appeared to suffer more than a passing pang of conscience Why did Kelly have to be one of the few females that had been given more than her share of ethics?

The next day laughing off her offer of the use of her rental car, Adam drove them to Tampa in his orange creature They spent much of the day looking at rare white tigers and cape buffalo delicate gazelles, dozing lions, and colorful birds, as part of Busch Gardens, one of the largest exotic animal collections in the United States Made up of the seven

regardless it was to impress the Dark Continent of Africa the park was an exciting mixture of wild jungle and mass-market tourist thrill rides."

"I can't believe you talked me into going," Father Kelly said on the trip back to Orlando. "I never have liked snakes but that twisting, turning, upside-down roller coaster was really a lot of fun." She laughed.

"I knew you would like it once I got you on it but then I didn't think I'd ever get you off. Six times was almost too much for me."

"You deserved it for getting me so wet on the white-water raft ride."

"How was I to know there was a waterfall around that curve?" he laughed.

"I noticed you knew when to lean forward though."

"Well, I made up for it on the Log Flume by sitting in the back of the car and getting drenched on that last hill. Of course having you sit on my lap during the ride more than made up for that." His blue eyes met her hazel ones affectionately.

"You're introducing me to all sorts of new experiences," she murmured softly then abruptly changed her tone. "And what do you have in store for us tonight?"

"You told me that you loved the movie Camelot so I thought you might like to slip back into the eleventh century and have dinner in a castle while watching a jousting tournament," he commented casually.

"What!"

"Just dress in your finest medieval-type gown and be ready at five-thirty. I'll show you a knight to remember."

Kelly groaned at his pun, but she was ready when he arrived. "I'm sorry, but this was the best I could do," she apologized, smoothing the skirt of her lustrous polyester knit dress. The fitted waist showed off her slender figure while the soft apricot color complimented the golden tan of her shoulders left almost bare by thin spaghetti straps. As she left her room she loosely draped a matching shawl around her arms.

Some women just don't know how to pack. He sighed and was rewarded with a playful punch on his arm. He looked pretty sensational himself tonight, dressed in a cool-looking light blue seersucker suit that perfectly matched his eyes. His neatly trimmed hair looked even darker against the startling white of his shirt collar.

"You don't look like any knight I've ever seen."

"I'm in disguise. I don't want to be forced into rescuing some damsel in distress and leaving you alone to be swept away by someone else. I'm very satisfied with the woman I have now."

"Don't say that," she cried, her heart twisting at his words. He must have said that same thing to his wife once, and it hurt Kelly to be reminded of Vicki.

Adam glanced over at her, a frown briefly furrowing his forehead. But he refused to let this strange interlude ruin the evening. They got into the car and drove off toward their destination.

"Kissimmee?" Kelly asked, reading the odd look

ing word off a road sign. To her surprise Adam leaned across the small interior of the car and kissed her cheek. "What brought that on?"

"You said to kiss you," he chuckled. "So I did."

"You're incorrigible," she accused, but couldn't help laughing.

Located in the middle of Kissimmee, a small town mostly made up of numerous motels, fast food restaurants, and souvenir shops, the large white Spanish style castle next to the highway looked very strange. After walking across a drawbridge over a moat filled with fish, Kelly and Adam felt that they had taken a step back into medieval times, just as this unique dining experience was named. They waited in a cavernous Hall of Arms, looking at the colorful shields bearing genuine coats of arms that were displayed on the ceiling and replicas of paintings from the Middle Ages that adorned the walls until trumpeters called them to the dining arena.

"I've never been here before, but I understand that this is a full-time job for these performers. They work hard to put on a good show that is realistic down to the last detail," Adam told her as they ate roast chicken flambé, spareribs, and an herb-basted potato.

"You've got sauce on your chin." Kelly reached over to wipe it off with her napkin. "I'm having a little trouble adapting to eating without silverware, too."

"They didn't use forks and spoons in 1093, and this place is a stickler for details." He caught her

hand as she was reaching for her napkin again and brought her fingers to his lips. One by one he touched her fingertips to his tongue, effectively cleaning them and at the same time causing her pulse rate to speed up. "But then, I can see where it might be a pleasant change occasionally."

The crowd's roar brought their attention back to the long arena in front of their table just in time to see one knight knock the other off his charging horse and onto the dirt floor.

"One point for our guy," Adam cheered, adjusting the red and yellow paper crown he wore that matched the colors of the costume worn by the winning knight.

"I hope the other one's not hurt," Kelly responded, concerned by the losing knight's noticeable limp as he left the arena while his squire caught his horse and led him to the exit. "It wouldn't bother me if they stretched the realism a little and let the men wear some sort of protective clothing. That one small shield doesn't look very safe to me."

"They didn't wear armor back then. At least these guys have time to practice and aren't really trying to kill each other."

But as the games continued it was easy to forget that the tournament below them was not really happening centuries ago on some foreign battlefield. Kelly felt exhausted from the excitement and tension of watching her knight get beaten in the final round.

"Let's take the day off tomorrow," Adam suggested, obviously sharing her feelings. "I'll rent a sailboat and we'll explore the Lagoon."

"That sounds great," Kelly agreed. Even though she was tired, the romantic evening had been melting her resolve, and by the time they arrived at her hotel she was genuinely sorry when Adam left her at her door. His good night kiss had fueled the fire that had been burning within her since that first day at Disney World, but even though she could see the desire in his eyes and feel it in the tautness of his body, he didn't ask to stay. And Kelly, being the person she was, couldn't bring herself to make the first move.

But she realized that soon she would be forced into making a decision about their relationship. She knew that there could be no future for her and Adam until Vicki made her final choice. But the question foremost in Kelly's mind was if she could forget her guilt long enough to let him know how much she cared for him now.

By Saturday, the tension Kelly felt had built to an unbearable point. The sun warmed her skin while Adam's slow, devouring kisses heated her blood to a degree that not even a swim in the pool could cool down. Partially hidden behind the sparkling wall of the waterfall, Adam held her wet, aching body against the full length of his as they leaned against the rocks, staying partially submerged beneath the water.

"I don't know how much more of this I can take," Adam murmured against her silken cheek. "Have you learned how to whistle yet?"

"Are you kidding?" she answered with a soft moan. "Right now I'm having trouble talking."

"I might settle for a hum." He persistently waited for her to make the first move, and still she hesitated.

That night was a Polynesian delight. Adam appeared on Kelly's doorstep dressed in a wildly flowered shirt that was as gaudy and colorful as the law allowed. Grandly he presented her with a gaily wrapped box that contained a matching blouse that he insisted that she wear that evening. Although she couldn't help wondering if he had lost every last shred of good taste, gamely she retired to the bathroom to change into the blouse she tucked into the waistband of her white jeans.

Adam's sky-blue eyes swept appreciatively over her and let out a long low wolf whistle when she reentered the room. "The only thing that would look better than those slacks with that blouse is a grass skirt. I almost bought you one today, but I don't know if I would be able to control my primitive instincts at the sight of you wearing it. Not to mention the fact that I have hay fever and would probably have sneezed all evening."

"Why do I get the impression that you have big plans for us tonight? I just hope we natives won't be friendly because I forgot to pack my poison darts. But then, they'll probably be helpless with laughter when they see these shirts."

"Now you've insulted me," he said, pretending to be hurt by her barbs. "If you had any idea how hard it was to find shirts that I felt made a statement, you wouldn't be so ungrateful."

"It's not that I don't love receiving presents, it's

just that I'm not exactly sure what statement these shirts are making. I just hope it's not rude or insulting." When she looked back at Adam she saw that he had pulled a limp-brimmed straw hat down over his dark hair.

"Then you probably won't think much of my new headgear, either." He sighed dramatically but broke into a smile at the sound of her laughter. "I even brought you flowers," he added as he brought out a handful of leis from behind his back.

"You can never go wrong with flowers," she agreed, and moved closer to him so that he could place them around her neck. There was a lovely pink one made out of fluffy orchids and a fragrant white and red one made out of delicate gardenias and ruffled carnations. After the necklaces were in place, Adam leaned down and kissed her on each cheek followed by a teasing smack on her lips.

"It's an old South Seas custom," he explained with a teasing twinkle. "It's a vicious cycle. The natives have to put on the leis to work up a passion, then turn right around and take them off again." He had saved the smallest one for himself, which was some sort of bright yellow flower that she couldn't identify.

"Guaranteed to be nonallergenic," he explained when she saw that his lei was artificial.

"I guess this means that you and I won't be getting very close to each other tonight," she said, admiring her own very real flowers.

"I brought along my allergy pills, just in case." That wonderfully crooked grin of his stretched across

his face as he punctuated his sentence with a promising wink.

Their first stop was at the Papeete Bay Verandah where they were brave enough to try a sampling of some of the more exotic Polynesian-style menu items. There were scallops marinated in coconut milk, sour cream, and a hint of horseradish, then the main course of chicken that had been marinated, then glazed with a honeyed sesame sauce and served in a pineapple half. Dessert consisted of a poached pear that had been marinated in apricot brandy, then covered with a strawberry cream sauce. Even the drinks were exotic, with strange names like the Blue Lagoon, Chi Chi, and Seven Seas.

After they left the Verandah, Adam treated Kelly to the Polynesian Revue at the Luau Cove. Listening to the alluring South Seas music and watching the graceful movements of the beautiful dancers as they told island stories with serpentinelike movements of their hands and suggestive sways of their grass-covered hips, it was not difficult to feel transported to some faraway tropical island.

That would be the ideal solution to their problem. Maybe some stormy day she and Adam could rent a boat and get washed ashore on some deserted island. Then they would have to do whatever was necessary to survive: catching fish, eating berries, and making love all night long under the fluttering canopy of palm fronds and sparkling stars. Adam would look terrific in animal-skin briefs that hung low on his slim hips, leaving his broad, tanned chest and long, well-muscled legs bare. Envisioning the

scene, she could see herself letting her hair fall long and straight around her shoulders and wandering around the island wearing only a bikini top and a grass skirt that she had made herself. Hopefully Adam would have remembered to bring along his allergy pills!

"Hey, he's in there. Do you hear me?" Adam's voice in her ear made her jump in surprise. "Where on earth were you?"

"I guess I was daydreaming." She tried to shrug off any further explanations, but the rush of color that stained her cheeks gave away her secret.

"That must have been some daydream. I just hope it was fun and involving a good time."

"You were," she stammered shyly, her long dark eyelashes lowering over her expressive eyes. Now she was fantasizing about Adam. How much longer could she hold out? How much longer did she want to?

The primal beat of the war drums pounding through her while she watched the athletic grace of the dancing warriors and seductive movements of the bikini-clad maidens only heightened her awareness of the very sexy man seated next to her. She envied the enveloping possession of his hand around hers, the warm pressure of his shoulder against hers, and the tickle of his breath against her ear as he whispered comments about the show, the exotic ambiance, and the beauty of the night and her.

"I may still buy you that grass skirt. I'd like to see you dance for me and tell me your feelings with your

hands," he murmured, sneaking in a kiss on the sensitive area below her ear.

"How do you say 'Down boy' in Hawaiian?" she whispered back, her hazel eyes glowing golden in the blazing torchlight. But her slight nip of his ear lobe gave him a more accurate answer than her words did.

"How about 'Later boy' instead?" he suggested.

After the last drumbeat faded in the still night air and the dancers slipped away, Kelly and Adam waited for everyone else to leave before they followed at their own pace. Their arms were wrapped around each other's waists, and they matched their steps as they walked slowly along the winding path. "I still have Bambi and your shoes in my room. Do you want me to take you to the Hyatt or would you like to stop by my place to get them and maybe stay for a drink?" he asked tentatively, afraid to ask her the question that was foremost on his mind. He didn't want her to disappear again.

"Sure, we can stop by your room for a little while," she refused to think about what might happen between them later. It would seem so sordid if it were planned. Somehow spontaneity made everything seem more innocent.

When they were in front of his room, Adam unlocked the door, then followed her inside. "What would you like to drink?"

"Just a diet cola. Isn't there a machine near here?"

"Yes. I'll run out and get some for us." He headed for the door, then stopped and looked back at her. A questioning, almost insecure expression

played across his handsome features. "Will you be here when I get back?"

"Yes," she answered simply but meaningfully.

He was back in record time. Trying to hide the fact that he was out of breath, he walked over to her and held out her canned drink. Hooking her index finger under the tab, she tried a gentle tug. When the can didn't cooperate, she jerked a little harder, spewing a fountain of carbonated cola all over Adam. She had been trying to be so cool, and now look at the mess she had made!

"Oh, Adam, I'm so sorry." Her apology was sincere, but as she watched the foamy bubbles slide down the sharp planes of his face while tiny brown droplets hung suspended from the tips of his thick lashes, she felt a giggle overtaking her. The situation that was supposed to be so romantic had turned absurd, but she realized the damage she'd cause if her laughter escaped. "I'll get you a towel," she managed to choke out with a straight face before she ran for the bathroom.

She had regained her composure when she returned with the towel, which she immediately used to wipe the remainder of the liquid from his face.

"I know you weren't crazy about the shirts, but did you have to be so demonstrative?" he muttered good naturedly, allowing her to dab at the wet stains darkening the blue and purple flowers.

"I love the shirts. It was very thoughtful of you. I wouldn't have been comfortable in anything else at the places we went to tonight," she protested. "You're just lucky your shirts wash-and-wear." With

out really thinking about what she was doing, she lifted it over his head then started unbuttoning the front of his shirt

One of his dark eyebrows rose quizzically as he watched her guileless fingers unfasten the last button, then reach for the towel to dry off his chest

Kelly's hand hovered in midair as she realized that she had just partially undressed this man and was about to wipe his chest Eyes that now seemed more green than brown lifted to meet his steady gaze "I guess you should take care of the rest The slight quiver in her voice betrayed her emotional upheaval

"No, you're doing just fine" In one smooth movement he shrugged out of his shirt and thrust out his chest toward her "You'd better wipe a little faster because it's getting sort of sticky as it dries

"Did you shake my can on purpose?" Her eyes narrowed suspiciously

"No, but it's not because my intentions were honorable It's just that I didn't think of it Now it's my turn to shake my can, so I can unbutton your blouse and wipe off your chest" His eyes twinkled mischievously as he spoke

"Oh, no you don't," Kelly cried, reaching for his coke before he could grab it A lighthearted wrestling match ensued with her in possession of the can and Adam trying to retrieve it When she held it behind her back, both of his arms snaked around her, successfully pinning her hands and capturing the can But the laughter died in their throats as they became aware of the sensual friction of their bodies moving

together during their mock struggles.

Kelly's first reaction was to step back, but as the curves of her body vanished against the sinewy firmness of his, she became weakened by the rush of feelings that assaulted every nerve ending. Slowly she relaxed against him, enjoying his tangy, masculine scent, his strong yet gentle touch, and the taste of his mouth, which moved coaxingly over hers.

"You taste like cola," she murmured, her voice echoing inside his mouth.

"And you taste like springtime. I've been waiting the whole winter of my life to find you." The tip of his tongue traced the full outline of her lips before slipping between her teeth. Correctly interpreting her moan of pleasure, he released her hands and dropped the unopened soda to the carpet, so his own hands would be free to thread through the thickness of her hair, gently tilting her head back and pulling her body closer against his at the same time.

Kelly's arms wrapped around his waist, and her eager fingers traced the pattern of muscles along his bare back, delighting in the tremors that shook his body at her sensitive caress. His kisses changed subtly, becoming more seductive and demanding, drawing a more than adequate response from her. Deep inside her muscles tightened into a hot, liquid ball of desire that begged for more than a few kisses.

Again she felt like Cinderella at the ball. For over a week she had danced with her Prince Charming, dined with him, and ridden around in that ugly pumpkin he called a car. But at the stroke of midnight it would be all over, and they would resume

their own lives. He made her feel like a princess cherished and adored, but he also aroused her most primative emotions until she ached for fulfillment.

A persistent knock on the suite's door penetrated their concentration. Muttering a profanity, Adam exclaimed, "Whoever that is, they have the worst timing in the whole world."

"Are we going to answer it, or are we going to ignore it?" Kelly asked, unwilling to break the magic spell. For another moment neither moved, hoping their unwelcome visitor would leave quickly and quietly.

But as another set of knocks resounded through the stillness of the night, along with a bellboy's voice announcing that he had an urgent delivery, Adam shook his head and sighed. "He's not leaving, and if we don't answer it, he'll wake up all my neighbors. At this time of night the natives will not be friendly."

"I'll answer the door and you can go wash up," Kelly offered, pushing herself away from the magnetic pull of his body.

"Good idea. I'm beginning to feel a little sticky. Here's some money for a tip, and don't encourage him to hang around any longer than necessary. I plan on picking up exactly where we left off as soon as he leaves," he promised, planting a kiss on the tip of her small nose and patting the firm curve of her rear before striding toward the bathroom.

Kelly opened the door to reveal a very uncomfortable bellboy standing there holding a bottle of champagne that was chilling in an ice bucket.

"I'm sorry if I interrupted anything, but I was told

to make this delivery even if I had to stay out here all night," he apologized, a blush reddening his young face.

"Don't worry. You didn't interrupt anything," she flashed, feeling sorry for his obvious discomfort. "We had just spilled some soda and were cleaning up the mess." She handed Dan Adams generous tip after taking the bucket then closed the door.

"What is it?" Adam's voice drifted to her from the bathroom.

"Someone sent you some champagne," she replied, staring curiously at the card and wishing for X-ray vision so that she could find out who had sent such an expensive gift.

As she walked back into the living room Adam emerged from the bathroom, his wet hair neatly combed and a white towel still draped around his neck. As he watched her move toward him, carrying the container and its cold contents, suddenly a memory flashed through his mind of another hotel suite in another city when he had come out of his bath catching a beautiful stranger holding an urn standing in his bedroom. Even though he had only seen her briefly, he knew, without a shadow of doubt, that this was the same woman. It had been bothering him that he thought he had seen Kelly somewhere before but just couldn't quite put his finger on where and when, until now.

A phrase he had once heard on his favorite childhood TV show *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* pushed into his mind. He couldn't remember it exactly, but the bad guy had confronted Napoleon Solo with the

a coincidence that the first time they had met it had been a happenstance. The second time it had been a coincidence but the third time was definitely on purpose. That statement applied here too. For some reason Kelly had gotten into his room in San Francisco, then followed him all the way here. He hadn't really thought about it before, but it was strange that she was registered at the Hyatt and had been hanging around the Polynesian Village for several days before he had made the move to introduce himself. He now felt certain that he knew who she had been looking for when she had been hiding behind that schefflera. She had been looking for him.

This was all very puzzling. She certainly didn't look like a spy, and although she had been interested in hearing about his work, she hadn't pumped him for information or asked any questions that had been particularly knowledgeable. Besides, there was nothing that secretive about his work. No, it had to be something else.

He remembered his earlier suspicion about Mark hiring her, but she had seemed genuinely bewildered by that accusation. Maybe she just had him confused with someone, but she had certainly traveled a long way and gone to a lot of trouble to find him. Nothing was adding up to a reasonable explanation.

"Adam, is something wrong?" she asked, setting the ice bucket on the table.

"Wrong? No, of course not." Again his mind continued to whirl with possibilities.

"You have the strangest look on your face. Don't

you like champagne?" She, too, was remembering the night she had brought him a bottle of champagne even though it had been several grades inferior to this one. But she never suspected that he had pieced together his own memories. Naively she felt secure in the fact that he probably hadn't given her more than a passing thought in San Francisco.

But she was wrong. Their interlude though short had been sweet. The memory of her soft lips her gentle flowery fragrance and her generous body bare covered with that gauzy gypsy girl costume had lodged in his subconscious. When he had seen her again here in Florida he had been attracted to her immediately even though he had mistakenly assumed they had never met before. He couldn't believe that her kisses hadn't triggered a total recall but he had become so fond of her that it hadn't occurred to him to be suspicious.

"Too bad whoever sent this didn't think to include some glasses," Kelly commented frowning slightly as she watched him absentedly wiping his face with the ends of the towel.

"They're not very fancy but there are some hotel glasses over there by the water pitcher." He forced himself to act normal. It was suddenly very important to him to find out the truth. He wanted to know what her real reasons were for following him and if everything that had passed between them was as phony and meaningless as the animated people he created and programmed. Absently he tossed the card aside and tore off the colored foil on top of the bottle.

"Stand aside," he cautioned. "We've already had one squad accident this evening, and I don't want anything else to spoil the rest of the night." He intended to find out the truth if he had to seduce it out of her. Master spy Napoleon Solo had always made the women talk with his charm. Adam was certain that he too could discover Kelly's secrets with the right persuasion.

They clicked their glasses together before sipping gingerly at the bubbly golden liquid. Their eyes met over the thick rims, each sparkling with desire for the other but both hiding questions that burned at their hearts along with their passions.

Aren't you going to look at the card? she couldn't resist asking.

No. I have other things on my mind right now," he said smoothly, assuming the role of master spy. "Did you ever watch *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* when you were a kid?"

What? His question was so far from her thoughts that it barely registered.

Never mind." Purposefully he set his glass on the table and reached out and took hers, setting it down also. "I think we were doing this before we were so rudely interrupted," he whispered sultrily, pulling her willing body back into his arms. He kissed her with a mixture of desire and disappointment. She had been very special to him, more so than any other woman he had ever known, and now he couldn't help but question her motives.

There was no doubting her response, however, as her arms wrapped around his neck, pushing away

he tower. Rapidly she combed her fingers through the still-damp ends of his dark hair while returning his kiss with all the ardor that had been smoldering within her. Slowly they sank down on the bed, adjusting their bodies until they lay, fitted together like two pieces of a puzzle.

Suavely he flipped the ties over her head before his hands moved down the line of buttons on the front of her blouse, releasing them one by one, then sliding the colorful garment off her shoulders. All the while his lips continued their pleasurable assault. Kelly sensed a difference in his attitude, but believing that he was as caught up in the excitement of the moment as she was, she cooperated by easing her arms out of the sleeves. Moving with a gentleness that belied its size, his hand stroked the bare skin of her flat midriff, then moved up, following each rib until he reached the silken barrier of her bra. Undaunted, his probing fingers flowed across the thin lace covering her breast in an upward spiral until he reached its peak. There was the slightest change in pressure as he captured her swollen nipple between his thumb and forefinger, then his hand retreated along the lacy white path under her arm and around to the hooks at the back. Fumbling slightly, he unfastened them, then helped her slip out of her bra and tossed it carelessly aside.

Pulling away from the delicious sweetness of her lips, he looked down at her. His blue eyes studied her softly, taking in every perfect detail of her feminine body. Instead of feeling shyness at his bold appraisal, Kelly responded by pressing her lips against

his, happily discovering that his desire was as strong as hers. A deep sigh shuddered through Adam. He was no longer thinking of any secrets she might reveal, but of the ecstasy they would soon share. He lowered his head, eager to taste what his eyes had just seen.

Sensuously his lips moved along the delicate line of her collarbone and down the silken valley between her breasts. A thick, heavy warmth settled deep inside Kelly as she moved restlessly beneath him. She felt the velvet caress of his tongue seeking out her breast, moistening and teasing before taking it deeply within his mouth. The soft tugs of his sucking tightened the intensity within her until she felt she would explode. She needed him, but even as he made her body ache for more, she couldn't drive the guilty thought from her mind that he was another woman's husband.

"Kelly," his voice sounded hoarse and breathless as he looked into her eyes. "Will you stay here tonight—all night? I want to make love with you until dawn, or until I die of exhaustion, whichever comes first."

She didn't think she had the courage to refuse, especially when she could feel the evidence of his need pressing against her and see the longing in the cloudy blue depths of his eyes. Pulling from a reserve of strength she didn't know she had, Kelly twisted away from him and sat up, turning her back to him.

"I want to stay with you more than I've ever wanted anything in my life," she answered slowly,

her voice trembling with emotion.

"Why do I feel there's a 'but' about to be a part of that statement?" Adam curled his body around her bare back, resting his chin on her shoulder and inhaling through the soft hammock of her hair to her cheek. He had never felt such love.

"But it's not," Kelly whispered, close to tears. "Not yet. There's something I have to tell you first."

CHAPTER EIGHT

"I'm not a prude or anything, but I've never dated or made love to a married man," she announced miserably.

Adam said nothing but waited expectantly for her to continue.

"I guess my mother did her job too well." She sighed heavily, then continued in a voice filled with anguish. "I've tried to ignore my conscience and forget about Vicki. But, at the most inopportune times, her face pushes back into my thoughts, and when—"

"Vicki? What on earth has she got to do with this?" Adam interrupted. This situation was becoming more confusing by the second.

Kelly whirled around to face him, fanning his face with the silken sweep of her hair. Her eyes welled with tears of pain as she confronted him with the facts that she knew. "I know all about your wife. She has a lot to do with this. I can understand that your marriage might not be very happy right now, but I couldn't live with myself if I thought I had any-

thing to do with breaking the two of you up for good."

"My wife? My marriage?" he echoed in a very good imitation of bewilderment. "But I'm not married," he protested.

"And I guess the next thing you're going to tell me is that you don't have any children back in Los Angeles waiting for their daddy to come home to them." Kelly had to admit that he was a good actor because he wasn't cracking under her interrogation.

"That's right. I don't have any kids, and I have never been married."

"Oh, come on, Adam! You've had your fun, but I know the truth. I've seen the picture of you and your family at Christmas last year."

Adam leaned back against the bed, raking his fingers through his rich, sable-colored hair, disheveling its neatness as he tried to figure out what she was talking about. "I spent last Christmas with my sister, Vicki, and her two kids, Amy and Jason. Her husband had been delayed in South America, so she invited me over to be a substitute father."

"Vicki's your sister? And Amy and Jason are your niece and nephew?" Now it was her turn to be confused. "But Vicki told me she was your wife and that you were cheating on her with practically every female you met."

"And you believed her?"

"Of course, I did. After all, she came to the agency I work for, fed me her sad story, and wanted to hire me to tail you and get evidence. Why shouldn't I believe her?"

"And what kind of agency do you work for?" he asked.

"I'm a private investigator," she explained. "I work for Casey Investigations. My badge is in my purse if you want to see it."

"No, I believe you." Suddenly a deep snort of laughter split the air, followed by another until he was practically rolling on the bed in a fit of hilarity.

"What's so funny?" Kelly sniffed, feeling suddenly very alone. Realizing that she was still half naked, she grabbed her blouse and hastily pulled it back on.

"It was a joke," he managed to explain between chortles. "I come from a very wealthy family. My parents were always too busy with their careers or their charities to pay me and Vicki any attention, so we stuck together and were very close. Anyway, ever since we were little kids we would think of outrageous things to do that would get us some attention. As we got older and smarter gradually, our little pranks became bigger and more complicated. For the last few years we've been having a running battle to see who could best the other one with the supreme practical joke. I thought I had won a few months ago when I secretly switched caterers for a big formal dinner she was planning. Instead of a lot of bland, pale French food, all the guests were served greasy barbecue, corn on the cob, and coleslaw. You should have seen all those fancy people trying to eat ribs, dripping in sauce, with their forks, and corn on the cob, without smearing it all over their faces. It was really quite a sight. The dry cleaner must have made a fortune from that event." He

shrieked again, remembering that night and how horrified Vicki had been. Of course, later she was able to laugh about it, but right then she had threatened to kill him.

But Vicki outdid herself on this one," he added with an appreciative smile. "So she hired herself a detective to follow me around and mess up any relationships I might be having. You were sort of a McCann PI, but without the mustache," he joked.

"It's not funny." Kelly gritted out humorlessly.

"Sure it is. It was just a harmless joke. Where's your sense of humor?"

"I have an excellent sense of humor, but I don't like being used as a pawn in a stupid game."

"You got a free trip to San Francisco and Honda out of it," he pointed out cheerfully.

"Thanks a lot."

"And you met me," he teased, reaching out for her. He was very relieved that the explanation for her following him around was so innocent. Watching the green fires sparking in her eyes and seeing the movement of her breasts beneath the blouse reawakened his interrupted desire. But he had not taken into consideration the possibility that she might not find this adventure amusing.

Which she didn't. Avoiding his hands, Kelly stood up and moved away from the bed. "I should have gotten paid for baby-sitting," she retorted hotly. "It never occurred to me that two supposed adults could think they can play with other people's lives. If you two want to pull juvenile pranks on each other, that's your business, but when you involve

someone else then the trick's gone too far. I should have brought my camera along and taken pictures of us together. You and Vicki and Mark what's his name could have gotten a real kick out of looking at them at your next party."

"That's disgusting. Of course we wouldn't have done that," he protested.

"If you had been with another woman either here or in San Francisco I would have taken pictures and given them to Vicki. I'm sure that Sue Ann would have looked sensational on an eight by ten glossy. What kind of warped relationship do you have with your sister that she wants to see dirty photos of you and your women?"

She knows me better than that. I'm not some horny teenager that pimps on any female that strikes my fancy. I rarely socialize when I'm out of town. Usually I'm too busy working and even though you probably don't believe it my work is very important to me. Vicki knows I'm not a playboy. She probably just thought it would be funny if I thought I was being followed around by a beautiful woman who was being paid to keep me at arm's length. Come to think of it, I'm the one who should be mad being trailed all over the country like a criminal and having my love life under constant surveillance," he hastened.

But his efforts to cause her lips into good humor were having no effect. Eyeing the stiffness of her shoulders and the firm set of her jaw, Adam realized that she was very upset. Standing up and walking toward her, he spoke in a low, soothing

voice. "Kelly, it was just a silly joke. You're taking this too seriously."

"You're damn right I am!" she seethed, continuing to keep out of his reach. "I take myself and my job very seriously. I don't think it's very funny to be sent all over the United States just to get even with someone when I could be working on a real case. You may find this hard to believe, but there are people out there who actually need my assistance. I could be out searching for a kidnapped child or an insurance fraud or even a lost poodle, any of which is much more important than wasting my time here."

"But you're going to get paid for the job, just as if it were real," he continued in his attempt to soothe her.

"You're damn right about that! But I'm sure you two poor little rich kids can afford it. And to think of all the agonizing I did over you and your wife. That's quite a joke on me, isn't it? I cried over you. Every time we kissed I felt guilty. But even though I was throwing away my morals and my pride, I couldn't stop being attracted to you. Well, here's something for you to laugh about later. I was only a heartbeat away from falling in love with you. Ha! Ha!" she added sarcastically. And without a backward glance at the man she had thought was her Prince Charming but who had turned out to be a frog, she snatched up her purse and stomped out the door, slamming it as hard as she could behind her.

Standing there staring at the closed door as the sound still reverberated in his ears, Adam shook his head in disbelief. "Damn," he exclaimed. "She did it

to me again. She disappears more often than Casper. We'll forget her. If she can't take a little poke then we couldn't have made it together anyway." Disgusted and feeling very misunderstood, he collapsed back on the bed. Reaching for the bottle of champagne, his eyes spied the card that he had previously ignored. Picking it up, he flipped open the seal, shook out the card, and read aloud. "Hope you're having a good time. Always watch your back. Darling. Love and kisses. Vicki and the kids." With a humorless snort he sent the small card sailing across the room until it landed on top of Kelly's scarlet and forgotten bra. "Perfect. Just perfect."

Kelly's thoughts were following much the same line as she fumed in the backseat of the taxicab all the way to the Hyatt. Not waiting for daylight, she changed clothes, threw everything else into her suitcases, and with a last inspection of the hotel room started to leave. But there, lying on a chair, was the floppy brimmed straw hat she had talked Adam out of wearing that evening. Hesitating a minute, she picked it up, stuffed it into her carry-on bag, and checked out of the hotel.

It didn't help her disposition to have to spend several hours sitting at the airport waiting for the first available flight to Los Angeles. All the way home she ranted and raved silently, working herself into a frenzy that helped her forget just how much she had liked Adam before she found out how much she disliked him. After a sleepless night she was incapable of rational thoughts. It would be several days before she could look back on the magic times she and

Adam had spent together with anything less than total hostility

She never told Jack all the details of her trip to Florida. But he knew her well enough to guess fairly accurately just how personally involved she had become. Although he was objective enough to see some humor in the situation, he had the sensitivity not to share his thoughts with her. Instead he immediately put her on another case to help her get her mind off this one.

Vicki's check arrived along with a personal note of apology and a request to take Kelly out to lunch, which Kelly promptly refused.

"She sent more than the amount that I billed her for," Jack casually commented. "I guess I should give you the difference as a sort of bonus," he suggested, expecting her to turn down his generous offer.

"Thanks, I'll take it." She surprised him with her calm acceptance. "I certainly earned this one. Besides, there are a couple articles of clothing that I have to replace," she muttered.

"This was one of those cases we couldn't win for losing. I've never had to prove to a guy's sister that he's sleeping around," Jack chuckled.

"He wasn't sleeping around."

"Right," Jack nodded. "He was just a lonely guy on the make for a pretty young thing to keep him company while he was in Florida."

"That's not true. You should have seen some of the gorgeous bodies he refused. He was warm and funny and maybe even a little bit shy," she said, defending Adam with a startling vehemence. "Unfortu-

nately he had the maturity of a twelve-year-old."

"Methinks thou dost protest too much," Jack observed.

"*Me* thinks thou dost stick your nose in other people's personal lives too much," she snapped back, but her earlier response gave her much to think about.

Her new case concerned the baffling disappearance of an unpedigreed but well loved horse that appeared to have wandered out of his stall. Nothing during her initial inspection of the stable had turned up any leads. There were no witnesses, no tire tracks, no cut fences. Just a gate that had been accidentally left open by a stable hand or by the thieves. It was key to try to discover what had happened and where the horse could be.

It took her almost a week and a lot of visits to local stables and feed stores before she found the horse being well looked after by a group of boys that were having a ball with their new pet.

"How did you ever find him so quickly?" the grateful owners asked when the horse was returned home.

"Since I knew that the one thing that horses do best is eat, I went to all the feed stores in a ten-mile radius and got their cooperation in finding out the addresses of new customers. When I heard that some boys had come in with a bag full of change and dollar bills, I had a good idea that they were the ones I was looking for. A bag of feed is pretty heavy, so I knew they had to live fairly close by. When I drove by and recognized the horse, they told me they had

found the horse making a mess out of one of their mother's flowerbeds. They decided to keep him and swore all their club members to secrecy. I talked to their parents, and they didn't have a clue that their boys were keeping a horse.

"I guess the important thing is that we got him back and that they took good care of him," was the owner's satisfied response.

And with the successful completion of the case came a return of some of Kelly's confidence in herself and her skills. Jack could tell she was ready for something with a little more meat, so after letting her help him clear up a few minor cases along with the mountains of paperwork involved, he assigned her to a case involving suspicion of office payola.

Marital infidelities and white-collar crime were the staples of a detective's diet. Although neither could really be considered physically dangerous, there was always an element of risk involved when dealing with people who knew that they were doing something wrong.

But Kelly welcomed the challenge. Not a day passed when she didn't think of Adam, the pain was still fresh in her mind, and her anger still burned. His and Vicki's manipulation of her made her feel very used. And she felt they had belittled her professionalism by hiring her for something so frivolous. It was difficult enough for female investigators to gain respect, but when her clients hired her knowing that regardless of whether she succeeded or failed, the outcome was totally unimportant, then that was the ultimate insult. She suspected that Vicki had proba-

had counted on Kelly's succumbing to her brother's charms. It would have made the joke just that much funnier if her plan had succeeded. And Kelly had come very close to providing Vicki with the last laugh.

Adam and Vicki probably had had a good laugh over Kelly the detective, who took pictures of the wrong things and almost made love to her client's "husband." They had made her look and feel like a fool. But the pain in her heart had nothing to do with Vicki. Even though Adam had not known what was going on, when he found out, he had thought the whole setup was extremely funny. His reaction had made her look at him through a different perspective. Maybe the humor and frivolity that had made being with him so much fun was an immaturity of which she'd have quickly tired. But she couldn't forget that the man also had shown an unusual amount of warmth, sensitivity, and sensuality, all of which were very admirable adult attributes.

No, she refused to dwell on his good points. It was easier to forget him if she emphasized his less desirable features. And the sooner he was out of her thoughts, the better. She associated him and his sister with personal and professional failure, and it would take more than one successful case to pull her out of these doldrums.

She attacked this new assignment with enthusiasm, putting together a wardrobe and attitude that fit the secretarial job she would be taking at the Fit Rite Gasket Company. She was being hired as a secretary to the company's purchasing agent, Victor Arnold.

who had been under suspicion of taking bribes for over a year. He had been very clever though, and it wasn't until his secretary had gone to take a maternity leave that the company had been presented with an opportunity to place in that position someone who could find out the truth without alerting Victor. Because of the delicacy of the situation, only the owners of the company and the personnel manager knew Kelly's true identity, which meant she would be on her own whenever she stepped into the office.

Her first day on the job turned out to be exciting, but certainly not dangerous. Her worst threat was learning how to pour toner into the copy machine without getting it on her hands and dress. The office staff treated her just as they would have any new employee. She quickly became aware of an undercurrent of hostility from a couple of the other secretaries who had felt threatened by a new face in the office, especially such an attractive one. Then there were the salesmen who felt it was their duty to be the first to conquer the attractive new addition to their office.

Not to mention Victor Amoia himself, who thought he was a cross between Tom Selleck and Walter Cronkite, but who, in reality, more resembled Mr. Whipple of Charmin bathroom tissue fame, except that Victor had a full head of wavy hair in an overdone pompadour hairstyle. And he had a creepy habit of slipping up on her when she wasn't expecting him and standing so close behind her that she could hear him breathe, even over the hum of the electric typewriter. At first she thought he was

just checking her work but after a week it seemed his hovering around her desk was even more frequent than before

"I've finished typing those purchase orders Mr Arnold," Kelly stated, indicating a folder on her desk but still he continued to stand behind her looking over her shoulder as she typed "I'm working on the inventory report right now"

"You're doing a fine job Kelly You don't mind if I call you by your first name, do you?"

"Kelly would be fine, sir she responded reluctantly feeling the hairs on the back of her neck stand up as his hip brushed up against her shoulder

"It's Vic" he corrected "I think it's much more comfortable to be on a first name basis, especially working as close as we will be until Sharon comes back."

"Yes, sir . . Vic."

"I was wondering if you would care to join me for lunch today Kelly" He moved around to the side of her desk, forcing her to turn away from her typewriter and look at him "There are several aspects of the job that I feel we should discuss further"

Kelly was hoping she could get the information she was after without having to get too personal with this man There was definitely a limit to what she would do in the line of duty "I'm sorry, Mr Arnold Vic but I've already made plans for lunch today" Which wasn't a total lie She had planned to take a peek at some of his files

"I never take no for an answer, but we can make it tomorrow if you prefer"

Kelly sniffled a sigh. It seemed as if a shadow or [illegible] she would never [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

out on errands, Kelly took an armload of files into Vic's office and began her investigation.

It quickly became evident that the main file cabinets were not hiding anything, and she became a little more creative in her search. As expected, his bottom drawer was locked, but she had a feeling that even that place would be too obvious for a man of Vic's intelligence. She knew she was running out of time, though, and made a mental list of the areas she would check next time.

That evening, after Kelly parked her car in the garage, she walked out in the backyard where her landlady was busily weeding one of her many flower beds. Kelly fanned herself absently with her small flat handbag as she approached the kneeling woman. It was only June, and already the temperatures were soaring into the nineties. Even this late in the day the heat lingered, heavy and oppressive.

"Hello, Alice. It looks like you've been working hard today," she commented, noticing the garbage bag full of clippings and weeds leaning up against a tree.

"I took a little rest in the middle of the day, but I've got some of my old friends coming over for lunch tomorrow, and I wanted the yard to look especially nice."

"It always looks terrific to me. And the smell is heavenly. If you could bottle this into perfume, you would make a fortune."

"I've already made a few fortunes in my lifetime," the old woman cackled. "And spent a few too. I have enough money tucked away to keep me comfortable

of the rest of my [illegible]. She looked up gratefully using her wrist as a retracted hand for leverage. "I wanted to thank you again for last night. I sure does a good job of keeping the sun off my face. You know you should never let sunlight touch your face. It will cause you to look old and wrinkled much too soon."

Kelly stood and moved a little closer to Alex. "It certainly worked for you. You don't look anywhere near your age. And I forgot about the hat. I sort of traded some of my clothes for it."

"Why don't you stay for dinner? It's been so long that I just promised myself that I would have some fun. I know it's now, but I can whip up some things quick. I mean, if you would like to."

"No, that sounds fine. I haven't had much of an opportunity lately. This is enough work, which I'm going to eat the rest of the summer," Kelly pulled on the straps of her overalls. "If you're finished with this, I'll put on the things for you. Then we've got to check on the sweet potatoes and change our clothes before dinner."

"Yes, thank you. It'll take me a few minutes to wash up and get things together at work," Alex replied.

Kelly turned her back against the inside wall of the van and looked down to climb up the flight of stairs to her apartment. She reviewed the tape on her mind's eye as she was undressing, then flipped through her memories as she listened to the short group of recordings until a voice that she had never expected to hear again jumped out at her.

"Kelly, this is Adam. It took me longer than I ex-

pected to finish the job at Epcot but I'm finally back in town and want to see you. We need to talk. Call me at 661-3606." He hurried through his message trying to squeeze it all in during the limited time before the next beep could cut him off.

The mail fell to the table forgotten. So he wanted to see her again. He probably hadn't had a good laugh in a couple of weeks. If his need to talk to her was so urgent, why had it taken him almost a month to contact her? She knew for a fact that the telephone lines between Florida and Los Angeles were in good working order. But then, she wouldn't have answered him if he had called three weeks ago. She didn't have any desire to become involved with his strange family and their practical jokes.

The time she and Adam had spent together had been magic, but no more real than those eerie little robots he programmed, which danced or sang or spouted the Gettysburg Address but could never feel the joy of love. Adam's background had not programmed him to feel love either. Life was just a big game to him. But he had forgotten to tell her the rules. Bonded by this crazy attraction she felt for him, she had played and lost. It would be stupid for her to think she could do any better in a rematch. Pushing the erase button, she finished changing her clothes and joined Alice downstairs. She knew she wouldn't be very good company, but Alice could be counted on to keep a conversation going all by herself and probably wouldn't even notice Kelly's sudden depression.

The next day, when Kelly awoke, she already

dreaded her upcoming lunch date. If she had not had ulterior motives in keeping this job she probably would have called in sick. As it was, she supposed it was just as well that she get it over with. Hopefully the ideas about her fiancee would keep the wolf at bay until she could nail his hide to the wall. Picking out her dullest, most unsupplementary outfit she tried it on in front of the mirror. It was one of those dresses that she must have bought on a rainy day when she was really down in the dumps, because if she had been feeling normal she never would have given it a second glance. The saleslady had called it taupe, but Kelly thought it looked more like a faded khaki with a pale green leather design adding nothing to its appeal. It was sort of a shirtwaist style, but the sleeves were short and a little baggy under the arms. She had never appreciated its unique ugliness until today. Not even Mr. Whipple would want to squeeze her in this dress.

But Vic either had extremely poor taste or he had mastered the art of flattery, because he complimented her several times on how good she looked. When her typewriter broke down just before noon, she thought she had found the perfect excuse to skip lunch. She certainly didn't want to miss the repairman, but a call to the service hotline dashed her hopes when they said that the earliest he could get there was tomorrow morning. Now not only didn't she have a convenient alibi, but with her typewriter out of order, there was no reason to hurry back.

Vic told the receptionist which restaurant they were going to, and then they left the building. As

soon as they arrived it became apparent that his taste in restaurants wasn't any better than his taste in fashion. It looked more than a little sleazy to her. Kelly began to wish she had called Jack and told him where she was going to be, but it was too late now. Surely she could handle herself and Vic through one meal in a public place.

As soon as they were seated he ordered a round of drinks, not even bothering to ask her what she wanted, then did the same when asked for their lunch selections. Kelly just smiled and tried to keep some distance between them in the cozy little booth he had picked for them.

"Now, Kelly dear," he began, reaching out and covering her hand with his own. "I just want you to know how happy I am to have you working for me. Not only are you beautiful and efficient, but you don't get involved with all those other busybodies at the office. I feel I can trust you."

"Of course you can, Vic." Kelly was beginning to see this luncheon in a new perspective. She really hadn't expected Vic to take her into his confidence so quickly, but perhaps today would be a breakthrough.

"I'm just interested in doing a good job, and since I'm a temporary employee, I don't have the time or the inclination to get involved with the rest of the office."

"I've noticed that. You keep your mouth shut." He paused as if weighing something important in his mind before adding in a hushed voice, "I'm going to have to go out of town next week, and there are a

few personal things I need you to take care of for me while I'm gone."

"You can count on me," she answered, her own tone lowered to match his. If it were possible for her ears to perk up, they would have as she leaned closer, wanting to hear what he was about to tell her.

"Hello, Kelly. I hope I'm not interrupting anything important," a deep voice boomed suddenly, startling both Kelly and Vic. It was obvious from his tone and volume that he was hoping no such thing. Guilty, she pulled her hand away from Vic's before looking up into a pair of clear blue eyes.

"Adam," she breathed.

CHAPTER NINE

"This is Adam," Kelly repeated unnecessarily forcing her eyes away from him and turning back toward Vic. She wondered how it felt to have a heart attack because the constrictions she was feeling in her chest right now were leaving her quite breathless.

"Yes. I'm Adam," he said, his eyes beginning to twinkle as he watched a variety of strange expressions animate the other man's face. "I hope you don't mind if I join the two of you for lunch." He didn't allow either of them to answer before sliding in next to Kelly. The space had been small before, but now all three of them were compacted like sardines.

"Is this the fiancee you were telling me about Kelly?" asked Vic.

As Kelly was opening her mouth to correct his false assumption Adam leaned over and, catching her completely by surprise, kissed her soundly and possessively.

"Of course I am. Who else kisses her like that?" he challenged, staring deeply into her confused eyes before looking past her at Vic with a restrained ca-

stillness he wasn't feeling. Suavely he motioned to the waitress and ordered a cup of coffee when she finally made her way to their booth.

It was just as well that no verbal response was expected of her because Kelly was incapable of carrying on any sort of conversation. She wasn't certain if it was the craziness of this situation or Adam's overpowering presence that had brought about her uncharacteristic muteness.

"Close your mouth, sweetheart," Adam told her facetiously. "You might swallow a fly. God knows there are enough of them in this restaurant to go around, but they would probably charge you extra."

Kelly's mouth snapped shut as she responded to his suggestion with a sharp jab of her elbow. She felt a little better at the sight of the slight grimace that momentarily twisted Adam's handsome face.

"Kelly has been telling me about you." Vic swallowed noisily as he measured Adam's height advantage and the width of his muscular shoulders. Obviously his friend's rehabilitation was succeeding, because there was no evidence of an excon in his neatly groomed appearance. Vic was pleased to note that crime apparently did pay, because the tailored slacks and snowy white polo shirt that Adam wore were not sale items from K Mart.

"Oh, really? And what has she been saying about me?" Adam asked curiously, eyeing a frozen Kelly and a very nervous Vic.

"Oh ... uh, she just mentioned that you've been doing fine since you got out of prison. I hope your

visit with the parole officer went well today."

Adam choked but disguised his laughter with a few muffled coughs. "You told him that?" he managed to ask, looking incredulously at Kelly.

"Yes," she answered simply, her gaze noticing the humorous arch of one dark eyebrow, which told her he was thoroughly enjoying this conversation. It was just the sort of fantasy he would appreciate, she thought wryly.

"I can't believe you would share our secrets with a stranger," he reprimanded her with mock severity.

Kelly was beginning to get a little angry at the way Adam had taken over. Again her elbow found a tender spot in his rib cage.

"Hell, Kelly! That hurt!" Adam bellowed, moving away from her sharp jab so suddenly that his hand slammed down on the table, jostling the flatware and almost tipping over her drink.

"I've got to go to the men's room," Vic said, hastily excusing himself. At the first hint of violence his pasty face had gotten even paler. He thought it would be best if he left the two of them alone and made a cowardly escape.

"What are you doing here?" she managed to ask, scooting far enough away from Adam so that she could look him straight in the face. It was too unnerving feeling the warmth of his body pressed against her when she was trying to remember all the reasons she despised him.

"This is a restaurant. I came here to eat, of course," he answered glibly.

"You can do better than that," Kelly snorted. She didn't believe for an instant that this meeting was a coincidence.

"So, can you." Adam indicated the empty space that Vic had been occupying. "Who is that guy, anyway?"

"He's my boss."

"That man owns a detective agency?" he questioned in disbelief.

"No!" she hissed, lowering her voice before adding, "I'm on an assignment, and Vic's the target. Your untimely arrival today may have ruined everything."

"Oh," was all he could manage to say, a sheepish grin making him look irresistibly boyish. A sudden mischievous twinkle intensified the image as he said dryly, "That's a *lovely* dress. Did you buy it especially for this date?"

"This dress is a candidate for the next Salvation Army clothing drive, and you know it. And this is not a date."

"There you go again. And I see you're still using the phony boyfriend story. If you would start dating a real man for a change, you wouldn't have to make up all those stories to protect yourself."

"I haven't met any real men lately."

"Oh? What does that make me — Boy George?"

"You remind me of that three-hundred-sixty-degree CircleVision film we saw at Disney World," she replied thoughtfully. She paused for a moment to construct her explanation. "There we were, standing in the middle of a roomful of people, experiencing

the thrills of the blast-off of the space shuttle or catching a wave at Waikiki Beach or floating over Monument Valley in a hot air balloon at sunrise. Regardless of whether we looked forward, backward or on either side, we were surrounded by the action. But even though we felt like we were really experiencing everything so much that we ducked and swerved, when the movie ended and the lights turned back on, we were still just standing in the middle of a round room full of strangers." She shrugged her slim shoulders in punctuation. "It looked and felt real, but it was just an illusion. It was fun while it lasted, but then it was over and we went on to something else."

"Can't you accept some of life's pleasures at face value? Do you have to look deeper for a hidden meaning to everything?" he questioned.

"I guess that's why I got into the line of work that I did. There's always a reason or an excuse."

"That sounds much too cynical for someone so young and intelligent. Why can't you relax and enjoy things as they happen, instead of expecting the worst?"

"And I suppose my experience with you and Vicki falls into that category?"

"Of course it does. Vicki didn't set you up. She was getting even with me. But I saw it for what it was, just a little good-natured fun, maybe a little too extravagant and unusual, but harmless." He could see that Kelly still wasn't accepting his explanation. Apparently it had hurt her, and she wasn't ready to forgive and forget. But he had to make her under-

stand that she had become more important to him than any game

After she had left him that last time in his hotel room he had intended to let her go forever But as he continued his work at Epcot he began to remember the things about her that had given him so much pleasure her gentle beauty her quick wit her obvious intelligence and her sincerity After he found out all the details he had understood her inner battles between what she felt she should do and what she really wanted to do He admired her for her morals and her loyalties to her background and her career And now he must convince her that he was worthy of her He had to prove that fun was not necessarily frivolity but could be balanced with seriousness and truth

"Who told you where to find me?" Kelly persisted totally unaware of the path of his thoughts.

"I refuse to reveal my sources," he answered "Why didn't you return my call?"

Elementary Watson Because I didn't want to talk to you " she snapped "Everything's already been said."

"No it hasn't You kept leaving so suddenly that I never had a chance to tell you how I feel about you "

"Oh, come on Adam Give it up The game's over, or do you and your friend Mark have a new bet on how long it will take you to have me panting to fall in your bed again?" Kelly's angry eyes glittered with green fires

Adam studied her silently for a few seconds

"There're no jokes, no tricks this time."

"I don't think you know how to play it straight."

Vic returned before Adam could respond. He sat on the very edge of the circular booth, trying to keep as respectable a distance between him and Kelly as the small space would allow. Kelly couldn't help thinking how odd it was that the side of her body that was again pressed against Adam's tingled with delight, while her other side cringed every time Vic moved. Gratefully she welcomed the sight of the waiter serving their food.

When only two plates were delivered, Vic looked at Adam questioningly. "Didn't you order anything?"

"No. I remembered that I had eaten a late breakfast. I'll just finish my cup of coffee while you two enjoy your meal." The fact that he had not come here to eat lunch wasn't overlooked by either of his tablemates. It was obvious that Kelly was the only reason he was here, and Vic was careful to make note of it. He valued his life too much to become involved with an ex-con's girlfriend. Finishing his lunch in record time, he looked expectantly at Kelly, who had barely touched hers.

"It's time we were getting back to the office. I've got some letters to dictate that you can type tomorrow when your typewriter is repaired." His impersonal tone was that of employer to employee.

As Adam stood up, allowing her to get out, she thought that at least she wouldn't have to worry about Vic making unwelcome advances. She just hoped that this didn't ruin her chances to be taken into his confidence. Brushing past Adam, she heard

him promise that he would call her but she ignored him as she followed Vic outside.

He did call, but she left her answering machine on even when she was at home so she wouldn't have to talk to him. She wasn't ready to face up to the wealth of feelings that he aroused. Besides, she needed to keep her wits together to crack this case. Vic hadn't shared any more details with her that weren't strictly legitimate. He had left town and would be gone for a week, which gave her very much to go on or very much time to discover his secrets.

Today she had gone through his ledgers, but everything appeared to be recorded accurately. There were no unexplained entries or obvious exclusions. She did notice that certain vendors, such as the Kipling Cork Company or Robbins Packing, were used much more often than some of the others, but that, in itself, was not proof of wrongdoing. She had plenty of time to search the office, but that too proved fruitless. Every route she investigated was turning into a dead end. Surely there was something, somewhere in this office, that would be a clue to help her.

As she left the Fit Rite building, something across the street caught her attention. Looking up, she saw the back of a man that looked suspiciously like Adam, but why would he be window shopping at a hardware store? A small crowd of people passed in front of her, and when she looked again, the man was gone. Ever since that fateful luncheon, she couldn't shake the eerie feeling that she was being

followed. But no matter how quickly she turned around there was no one there. It must, as he a bad case of nerves, she reasoned.

But the sensation continued. Several times dur ing the next few days she caught a glimpse of a dark head or a set of broad shoulders that she could have sworn belonged to Adam. She was beginning to get very suspicious about him and his motives. Had he taunted her to the hunter? Was this some new game to him to follow her around playing amateur sleuth?

That evening there was a recording on her ma chine that helped confirm at least part of her sus picions. A voice that sounded exactly like Inspector Clouseau right down to the French accent said, I know you are getting my messages. I have a secret to this swine recorder more than I have been talking to myself lately. But this time I do not want you to ring me back because I won't get you refuse my offer to take you to lunch tomorrow. Maybe I can help you catch the Pink Weasel you are after. Kelly couldn't help smiling at his clever antics. Yesterday it had been Perry Mason and the day before that John Wayne. He threatened to call out the calvary if she didn't return his calls. It was crazy, but she was be ginning to look forward to his messages.

She also discovered that she was excited about lunch the next day. All morning she waited for him to call and let her know when and where she should meet him. She didn't stop to question her reasons for even considering his offer. The thought to decline just never occurred to her. Twelve o'clock arrived and still there was no sign of him. Disappointment

mingled with anger as she watched the clock's big hand steadily march to five minutes after the hour.

Waiting for someone *and alone*. Adam appeared in front of her, the spicy odor of a pepperoni pizza radiating from the large flat box he was carrying. "The square pizza place was more crowded than I expected."

"What made you think I would want to eat pizza today?" she bristled unusually testy.

"I knew you were a woman who recognizes the finer things in life. Besides, I wanted you all to myself for an hour, and the only way I could accomplish that was by bringing lunch to you." He smiled warmly, ignoring her hostility.

"You were almost too late. I was just about to leave," she bluffed, trying to ignore the way her body came alive whenever Adam was around.

"Am I too late?" Both of them knew he wasn't referring to lunch, but rather something much more complex. Kelly wasn't sure of the answer. A month ago she would have answered with an emphatic yes, but now her firm resolve was melting like chocolate in the sun.

"Not if the pizza's still hot," she replied. "Let's eat in Vic's office. He's out of town this week."

She showed Adam the small conference table that they could use and went to get some drinks from the machines. When she returned, he had set out the paper plates and napkins.

"They forgot to give me any forks," he apologized.

"Surely you don't eat pizza with a fork," Kelly

said, pretending astonishment.

"Actually I don't, but I wanted to make a good impression and make you think I did." He laughed. "You do like pizza, don't you?"

"Yes, I love almost any kind of Italian food."

"Me too. See how much we have in common," he announced with a triumphant twinkle in his eye.

The pizza disappeared quickly. Kelly had been surprised that between bites they had been able to talk as easily as they had before. She began to lose perspective of the uncrossable distances between the two of them. The gap seemed to be smaller every time she looked.

Adam was leaning back in his chair, looking around the office. "So this is what a gasket executive's office looks like. Not bad, but I'll have to show you mine sometime."

"You have an office?" For some reason Kelly was surprised to hear that.

"Of course. I *do* work, you know. I may be a freelance robotics engineer, but I do have to have a home base to work on plans and future ideas. Besides, every executive needs a place where he can chase secretaries and take a nap in the afternoon."

"To rest up from all that running, I suppose," she added with a teasing smile.

"It's just one of a boss's many duties. A man has to do what a man has to do." He sighed dramatically.

"Thank goodness you're not my boss," then.

"I agree with that. You run too fast," he quipped. Restlessly he got up and wandered around the small

room. Pausing at a set of low bookcases that lined the wall behind Vic's desk, he studied the titles. "You know something? I never would have guessed that old Weasel Face was the type that would appreciate the literature classics," he commented. "He's got quite a collection here, everything from Kipling to Twain."

A little bell went off in Kelly's head. "Kipling and Twain?" she repeated thoughtfully. "As in Kipling Cork or Twain Electronics," she mused aloud. Trying not to get too excited, she joined Adam in front of the bookcase. "Is there anything by Cooper or Stevenson?"

"Yes, both of them," he confirmed. "What's going on in that devious little mind of yours?"

But Kelly didn't answer as she pulled out *The Last of the Mohicans* and flipped through the pages until a folded ledger sheet fell out. "Aha! Cooper Rubber Company," she read aloud. "A complete accounting of cash payments for the last three years. He's even more of a crook than they suspected."

"What are you talking about?"

"His filing system. He hid records of his ill-gotten gains in these books." She flipped through several others and found more evidence. "See here's one for Twain Electronics and one for Robbins Packing."

"As in Harold Robbins? Not quite in the same category as Kipling, is he?"

Kelly shrugged. "Where else would he hide Robbins Packing? He couldn't file it under Hemingway."

"I guess he was lucky he wasn't dealing with a

company named Matagorda Metal. He would have had trouble finding a place to file that!"

But Kelly was too busy to comment as her eyes eagerly scanned page after page. "It's all here in black and white and in his own handwriting."

"I can't believe anyone would be stupid enough to keep records like this," Adam said, shaking his head in astonishment.

"It's one of the major faults of a criminal mind. They think they are too smart to get caught. Oddly enough they almost always keep excellent records. I guess Vic wanted to make certain no one cheated *him* on their payoffs. These companies were given thousands of dollars' worth of contracts when they guaranteed Vic a percentage. He's been making quite a lot in unofficial bonuses."

"So this is the information you've been after here?"

"Yes, it looks like it. Now I've got to notify the owners right away. They will have to act fast if they want to catch him before someone tips him off and he skips the country."

"Don't feel you have to thank me," Adam grumbled, feeling a little left out.

"Oh, yeah, thanks for lunch."

"And for helping you crack this case. Maybe we should consider becoming a team and starting our own agency."

"You've been watching too much television," she said, casually shooting down his suggestion. "You'd better leave now, and take that pizza box with you, please."

Sure, just eat and run. If I tell you later will you talk to me, or do I have to talk to your mirror again?"

It depends on who calls. I haven't talked to Humphrey Bogart in ages."

"Here's looking at you, sweetheart." He put on an imaginary fedora, down over one eye, and saluted before picking up the empty box and leaving the office.

Jack Casey was very impressed with the way she had handled this assignment. By the end of the day Victor Amiad had been arrested and was on his way home to face the music. The owners of Eat Rite Casket Company were liberal in their praise of Kelly and her work, both as a secretary and as a detective. They jokingly offered her a permanent job if she should ever decide to leave Jack's employ.

Another successful case under her belt made Kelly feel much better about herself and life in general as she drove home that evening. Even when she saw that there was a strange car parked on her side of the driveway, her spirits remained high. The sun was just dropping below the tops of the trees as she checked her mailbox and started to walk up the stairs.

"Kelly, dear," Alice called. "This nice man stopped by to see you. While we were waiting, I'm afraid I've been boring his ear with my old stories." She was tittering like a schoolgirl. Apparently the man had made quite an impression on her.

Kelly shouldn't have been surprised, but she was. Adam was making a habit of showing up unexpectedly. There he sat, his long legs stretched out in front

of the town hardly seeking a glimpse of Adam. I looked up and saw Adam walking with Alice. I couldn't help but notice how beautiful she looked in the moonlight.

"Well, hello stranger. What brings you out on a beautiful night like this?" Ken asked, ignoring the words that were not even flattering to say to a woman he had loved but who she was likely to see as trying to know more about her than she was interested.

There was something very peaceful and soothing about sitting on the verandah listening to the day gradually come to a close. The sun had taken away everything from the day and even the flowers until the night birds and insects came out in a little chill.

"I invited Adam to stay for dinner. I've got a roast in the oven and it won't take more than a few minutes to throw together a salad. You must join us, Ken," Alice insisted.

"Only if you'll let me help."

"I can cut lettuce," Adam volunteered. After dinner Alice has promised to show me her scrapbooks. I can't believe that you hardly was a screen movie star and you never mentioned it to me."

"I didn't think you would be interested." Ken picked up the empty salad jar and Adam picked up the glasses and walked with Alice down the house.

"Of course I would be interested. It was one of my all-time favorites. Do you have a video tape of that movie?" he asked Alice.

"Yes, and I have some old stills you might like to

scr I had parts in about thirty films but that was my best role I was nominated for an Academy Award, you know Alice was glowing from all the attention she was receiving There weren't many young people nowadays that had even seen a silent movie, much less remembered the name Alice Lily Her career had been brilliant but brief, with only a few really major roles to her credit Mostly she had become famous for playing very young wide-eyed innocents who flaunted a lot For some reason she had never been able to make the transition from silents to talkies

It was obvious that Adam had made another conquest All through dinner and later, as they pored over Alice's scrapbooks and watched videotapes of her movies, he and Alice enthusiastically discussed the strong points and flaws of dozens of old films, most of which were unfamiliar to Kelly Even though she had not contributed more than a dozen words all evening, she was enjoying the opportunity to sit back watching Adam and listening to the rich, deep timbre of his voice Happy memories pushed away the painful ones as she remembered the time they had spent together

It was very difficult for her to overlook the circumstances of the joke that had brought them together but that same enjoyment of life that fueled his desire for the ultimate practical joke was what made him so interesting and exciting This strange feeling within her that seemed to swell and explode whenever she was with him, and made her ache with a hollow pain when she was not, was causing

her a lot of confusion. She had never denied that they shared a powerful sexual magnetism, but this was more than just physical. He made her feel special, which made him special to her.

Maybe the joke *had* been funny and she had just been too close to it to appreciate it. Maybe it was time to put that particular incident behind them and look to the future. Maybe she should admit to herself that she had fallen very much in love with the strange, wonderful man who was sitting here making an old woman happy by listening to her memories.

Kezy shifted restlessly in her chair. She couldn't just burst out with her proclamation of love. She needed to be alone with Adam so that they could discuss their real feelings. But there was no way to put a quick, civil end to this evening without hurting Alice's feelings. She would just have to trade her anxiety until Adam was ready to leave and, perhaps, adjourn to her apartment.

And maybe tonight would be the night.

CHAPTER TEN

It was after midnight when Alice finished the last page of her manuscript. She nevertheless protested when Adam said it was time for him to leave. After assuring him that he would be welcome to stay, she walked him and Sam to the door, leaving the porch light on for them.

I've got a rental car in my name, Adam said as they walked slowly toward the driveway. He wrapped his arm around her and I would think I felt ridiculous carrying Barney on the plane with me, then you'd never think again.

Alice could not help laughing at the memory. Then she got a big mascara kiss, carrying a briefcase in one hand and the stuffed animal in the other.

I had to do it for I had enough, being deserted by you once, she whispered. I just couldn't ever do that again. Adam answered emphatically. He even turned and moved toward his car, then stopped and moved back. He retrieved Barney and a small sack containing her personal items from the backseat of his dark metallic-blue Mercury Cougar and handed

them to her

"Well I guess I had better be going," he said unenthusiastically

Kelly took a deep unsteady breath and stepped closer her empty hand reaching out to touch his arm "I was hoping you would come up to my apartment for a while I've done a lot of thinking about our situation lately and I'm ready to talk"

Adam had been watching her expressive face closely, reading the hope beneath the apprehension in her eyes He sensed that they were on the verge of exploring new frontiers in their relationship and he wanted more than anything to stay His arms wrapped around her slender body, pulling her against him

"Oh Kelly," he murmured against her soft sweet smelling hair "You'll never believe how much I've missed holding you like this Two months ago I would never have believed it I know we need to settle a few things but damn—"

She leaned back far enough to look into his face which mirrored his agitation and frustration "What's wrong?"

"I've got to be on the two A M flight to Orlando There's a big meeting tomorrow or rather this morning, with some of the Disney executives about the scheduling for my project I'd cancel it if I could, but'—he groaned—" it's something I don't have any control over"

"How long will you be gone?" she asked, trying to sound understanding and not as disappointed as she felt

Let me know [illegible] I'll get someone [illegible] I should be back in a couple of days [illegible] sighed against the soft skin [illegible] I could take a couple of weeks

It won't worry about it. We can work when we get back."

You can't [illegible] I'll [illegible] from there." His tongue flicked [illegible] her earlobe. His hand [illegible] the softness of her hair. After [illegible] held her head gently [illegible] heat between her lips [illegible] devoured hers as soon as they met. "I want you [illegible] now."

[illegible] when we get back.

I've waited [illegible] he told her softly, still showering kisses along the full, moist curves of her mouth.

I promise I'll never run away from you again." he whispered, knowing that she couldn't leave him even if she wanted to. She was no longer sure she could ever be happy without him.

I guess I'll have to trust you." Maybe the real miracle [illegible] He glanced at his watch over her shoulder and groaned. "I have to leave now.

Let me get these things down to the line my keys I'm parked behind you."

With one last heart-wrenching kiss, Adam set her in the front seat of his car. After waiting until she backed her car out, he eased his Cougar down the driveway, pausing [illegible] to call to her. "Any chance I could talk you into going with me?"

Not this time," she replied apologetically. They'll need me when they offload a book. I'll see you

soon. She threw him a kiss and waved before she drove her car back up the driveway and into the garage while mentally adding the fervent wish I hope.

Kelly pulled the tight satin shorts over her black silk stockings and stepped back to look at her image in the mirror. Thank goodness her mother couldn't see her now, she thought with a wry smile touching her bright red lips. Her long brown hair had been coaxed into a riot of curls by a lengthy session with her hot rollers. A ring of black lined her hazel eyes, and a liberal application of blusher highlighted her cheekbones.

A glittery sequined tube top clung to her firm, full breasts like a second skin. The matching ruby red shorts fit snugly around her buttocks and stopped at the top of her thigh, leaving her long legs bare except for the hosiery's thin layer. As much as she had hated the gypsy costume, she liked this one even less. Possibly because it covered less of her body and showed off her feminine curves even more indecently.

But tonight, at least, less was best.

"Lord have mercy, child! Where on earth are you going dressed like that?" Alice exclaimed with grandmotherly concern as Kelly walked through the backyard toward the garage.

"I'm on my way to catch a runaway." Kelly reassured her amicably. "Her name is Sharon, and she's only sixteen years old. Her parents have reason to believe she is in this area, so they've hired us to find her and try to persuade her to contact them. We've exhausted all of the usual leads, except this one. It's

said "but there are so many young girls that turn to the streets when they can't make it here on their own. So, I'm going to see if I can get some information by doing a little night work."

"But isn't it dangerous?"

"I've thought of that. But there're so many women down there. I'm hoping I can just blend in long enough to locate her," she explained.

"Just be careful."

Kelly decided to begin her evening on Sunset Boulevard which was always crowded regardless of the time of day. She moved slowly but methodically down the blocks, stopping often to strike up a conversation with one of the women whose garish wardrobes were the uniforms of their profession. Some were cooperative, studying the small picture of Sharon that Kelly was carrying in her purse, while others refused to even acknowledge Kelly's presence. But, when after two hours she still didn't have any new clues, Kelly moved on to another street.

Her stiletto heels clicked as she strolled down the sidewalk, the sound changing subtly when she crossed one of the numerous bronze stars that were set in the concrete. She didn't have time to notice the names of the actors and actresses engraved onto the medallions on this Walk of Fame. Her eyes were busy searching for one particular young face among the dozens that she passed.

It was late enough that the crowds had begun to thin out some, but still it was noisy with the sounds of a wide variety of music coming from several directions at once. And there was the constant buzz of

people talking and the raucous shouts of passersby along with the constant traffic cruising the street that proclaimed that this area which thrived on business during the daylight hours was alive with action of another kind after dark. Kelly didn't even pay any attention to the insistent honking of a car's horn as she talked to a tall redhead trying to prompt the woman's memory.

"She's my kid sister and I feel responsible for her. She got the impression that I was living the good life here in Hollywood and wanted to get in on it, but she's just sixteen. I've got to find her before it's too late." Kelly cried out her best sob story, hoping to play on the woman's sympathies.

"Yeah, she looks sort of familiar. Maybe I saw her working the corner a couple a blocks that away," she answered vaguely.

"When was that?" Kelly persisted, encouraged by the first possible clue she had heard all night.

"Hey, I got to go. That guy keeps honkin' at me. Sorry I can't stay and chat, but you know, business is business." She shrugged and headed toward the curb.

Kelly, who had her back to the street, slipped the picture back into her purse and crossed her fingers, hoping she was heading in the right direction.

"Hey, sister," the woman called toward Kelly's retreating figure.

"Me?" Kelly stopped.

"Yeah, you, hot pants. This guy said he was honkin' at you." The redhead stepped away from the car. "He's all yours, but if you don't think you can

[illegible] glad [illegible] you [illegible] If he's [illegible] good [illegible] looks [illegible] I have [illegible] work [illegible] for you"

Kelly [illegible] indirect [illegible] the first time the dark [illegible] caught [illegible] ing [illegible]

[illegible] gorgeous [illegible] seeing [illegible] in a place like [illegible] Are [illegible] searching [illegible] real [illegible] the man's deep voice taunted

Adam [illegible] Kelly smiled [illegible] into the [illegible] passenger's window [illegible] kissing [illegible] cold lips "You're finally back"

[illegible] was [illegible] when expecting me [illegible] he commented [illegible] That's what I like about you Kelly I can [illegible] was counting [illegible] sitting there waiting eagerly for my return"

Kelly was surprised [illegible] his petulant tone [illegible] she had never seen him [illegible] in all [illegible] I'm working [illegible] she [illegible] somewhat defensive

[illegible] set [illegible] how [illegible] have [illegible] make [illegible] night What would it cost me [illegible] get [illegible] piece [illegible] action Adam asked but [illegible] his smile softened his harsh words.

Kelly [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] took [illegible] deep breath [illegible] then opened [illegible] car door as calmly as possible Stepping [illegible] she [illegible] next to him she explained [illegible] [illegible] a young girl [illegible] she [illegible] [illegible] number file She took the picture out of her purse [illegible] passed [illegible] him "In this case [illegible] of the essence so I had to take [illegible] me sure to get some information Sure you can understand that these people wouldn't talk to an outsider especially a detective

"And," she continued, "I'm so glad to see you that I'm going to overlook your rudeness. Maybe we can meet later, but right now I just got a lead I've got to follow up on."

His narrowed eyes harshly raked her slim figure, taking in the generous swell of her breasts exposed above the tube top. "I don't like everyone to see you dressed like that," he muttered. "Is your job always so sordid? If you're not following people suspected of cheating on their spouses, taking dirty pictures or having lunch with a weasel-faced thief, then you're walking the streets with the sleaziest scum in the world."

"You're obviously suffering from retarding. Why don't you go home, take a couple of aspirin, and get to sleep before we get into an argument?" Kelly suggested with forced patience. "I'm trying very hard to be understanding, but you know how involved I am with my work. As a detective I have to take the work that the police don't have the time or inclination to handle, and right now you're keeping me from my job. Call me tomorrow if you're in a better mood." Jerking the picture out of his hand, she exited his car, shutting the door with a little more force than was necessary. Halfway expecting to hear him call her back, she heard instead the revving of his car's engine and the squeal of the tires as it accelerated away from the curb.

Her anger dissolved into disappointment. She had been looking forward to his return so that they could begin to develop their relationship without the shadow of Vicki looming between them. Now that ghost had been replaced by another—her job. But she refused to feel guilty about that. She had chosen

centrate on finding Sharon tonight. She had heard all sorts of horror stories about young girls sucked into this evil life, who were too afraid or too weak to get out of it. Besides, Kelly wasn't relishing the idea of coming back out here again.

She covered the next few blocks each time hoping that the next person she talked to would be able to tell her something definite about Sharon. A few more women thought they recognized the picture, but it seemed that Kelly was always several minutes behind Sharon. At least she was fairly certain she was on the right track now. Her feet were beginning to ache and her head was pounding. The confrontation with Adam hadn't helped matters any. If she'd only let her know she was sick, she would have given up.

Again her thoughts were interrupted by a horn honking next to her. She tried to ignore it as she had had to do several times on account of the selection was too good for any of the men she had attracted to be too persistent. Usually they'd just move on to the next girl. But this guy stuck with her for the entire block. At last she turned to tell him she was on her way to another appointment, but she found herself staring at Adam's car.

She wasn't in any mood to play games with him right now, but when she went over to tell him so she discovered to her shock that he wasn't alone in the car. A very pretty, but frightened, young girl was sitting cuddled up next to him.

"Get in," Adam demanded, reaching across the girl to open the door.

Kelly shook her head. She tried not to look too

closely at the occupant in the car. She was shocked by the pain that was causing Adam with another woman was causing her.

"They matter. I'm supposed to charge extra for groups," the girl protested, drawing Kelly's wandering attention to her face.

Even though the hairstyle was different and the makeup much heavier, there was no doubt that this was Sharon. Kelly's eyes widened in surprise as she turned her attention back to Adam.

"It's her!" she exclaimed.

"I thought so." He nodded. "Would you please get into this car before she takes advantage of me?" His retort showed that some of his good humor had returned, and this time Kelly obediently obliged.

"Sharon, I've been looking everywhere for you."

"Why? And how did you know my name?"

"My name is Kelly, and I'm a private investigator. Your parents are very worried about you, and they hired me to find out if you were okay. They love you very much and want you to come home."

"They do?" Sharon asked in a frightened tone.

"Yes, they do. You really shook them up when you ran away like that. They realize that there have been some problems between you and that maybe they haven't listened to your side enough. But they want you to know that if you'll come back, they'll try to work things out."

A sob escaped from Sharon's throat. "I was so scared. I wanted to be in the movies, but I got so hungry and lonely. Nothing's the way I thought it would be."

I know what you mean," Kelly sympathized. "That's a tough way to make a living.

"But my parents will be so mad at me. I've been so stupid."

"I bet we'll them just to see me. I know they'll be so glad to have me back that nothing else will matter. They seem to be nice people. It's nice to be trying a little bit harder to keep up with the rest of the world."

"It's never been time for me. I have no older sister to be so perfect and be more popular than me, and my younger brother is the baby of the family and the only boy. My parents never seemed to notice me. I don't even think they would realize that I was gone."

My parents were like that, except there was just my sister and myself. Adam spoke up for the first time since Kelly had started talking to Sharon. "They were always too busy to pay as much attention, and I used to resent it. But as I grew up I realized that they do love me and my sister, and we love them, but we'll never be like the Cunningham family in *Happy Days*. That's just the way things are on TV, and once I learned to accept it we've gotten along real well."

Kelly paused, giving Sharon a minute to think things over before asking, "Why don't you let me take you to your parents tonight? You can get a good night's sleep. I'm sure there's nothing here that you will miss."

"But my parents live in San Diego. It's pretty late, and that's a long way from here."

It's not that far. My sister lives in San Clemente so I drive the road a lot. Sit back and relax because tonight I'll be your chauffeur," Adam gallantly offered.

"I know you're tired from your trip," Adam. "My car is parked just a few blocks from here. I'll get it, take her home." Kelly protested but was glad when he overruled her.

"We'll pick up your car after," she said matter-of-factly, then turned to Sharon. "Sharon, could you bring me things with you that we need to get before we leave?"

"No. I sold some of my clothes after I ran out of money so I could pay for my hotel. There was days ago, someone stole the rest."

"There's a twenty-four hour restaurant just out of town. I've skipped a few meals myself lately and I bet you could use a good hot meal, so we'll stop there," he said, guiding his car back onto the trail and heading toward the freeway.

Several hours later, Sharon had been deposited into the grateful and waiting arms of her parents and Kelly and Adam were on their way back to Los Angeles.

"I'm really starting to feel tired now," Adam yawned. "We're only a few miles from Vicki's house. Would you mind if we stayed there tonight, come tomorrow Saturday and we could take advantage of the drive home to have our talk?"

"But it's almost midnight. What will Vicki think about us dropping in so late with no notice?"

"She won't mind. She usually stays up pretty late. Besides, I haven't seen her since she set us up. She

...s ... don't you think? Now why don't you ... over here next to me and keep me awake?"

"I've been wanting to do this since we left L.A." Kelly said, snuggling up next to him as he wrapped his arm around her shoulders. Taking his eyes off the road for a second, his lips told her that he was glad she was there. With a happy sigh he added, "That was a nice thing you did tonight. You handled everything really well." "Not only did I appreciate your help but I think your little talk with Sharon did her a lot of good."

"I hope so. I know your talk with me did me a lot of good. I'm sorry I acted so ugly earlier. I didn't mean to come on so strong, but I get so worried about you."

"You're forgiven. Now tell me how you found Sharon."

"There's no trick to picking up a girl. I just drove around until I spotted her."

"Why didn't I think of that?" Kelly asked in amazement.

"I don't think it would have worked the same if you had been driving the car." He said, chuckling. "See, I told you we made a good team."

"I hope you aren't expecting to get a cut of my meager salary." She laughed.

"We'll talk about my payment later." He promised, his eyebrows arching expressively. Kelly didn't answer but leaned her head against his cheek.

"I hate for you to move, but look in the glove compartment. I brought you a present," said Adam.

Delighted, Kelly flipped open the glove compartment and took out a small object that was rolled

in tissue paper. Carefully she unwrapped it until she held a whimsical ceramic dragon in her hand. "It's Figment," she said, remembering the two pyramid-shaped crystal-looking buildings that had housed the exhibit Journey into Imagination at Epcot. During the course of the ride a professor named Dreamfinder had created a creature of his imagination made from a combination of "horns of a steer, royal purple pigment, and a dash of childish delight." The end product had been an adorable fat purple dragon with orange horns and wings and a perpetual smile.

"He's sort of like you, isn't he?" Kelly added perceptively. "He uses his imagination to make things happen. I think you're trying to tell me that it's not necessary to be a child to have fun."

"Who, me? I just bought him because I thought he was cute," he denied, laughing at her accusations. "But it wouldn't hurt for you to loosen up a little bit and be more spontaneous."

"Maybe I'll surprise you someday," she replied thoughtfully.

As predicted, Vicki was still awake and thrilled to see them. Of course, she viewed Kelly with a little apprehension and a lot of curiosity until Adam explained why she was dressed so peculiarly. Her eyes, so very like Adam's now that Kelly knew the truth, sparkled mischievously, but she wisely made no mention of the fact that Kelly and Adam were together. After graciously loaning Kelly a knee-length coverup, she fixed a pot of coffee, and they sat around the breakfast table and talked.

Kelly felt a little awkward at first, but Vicki and

Adam's quick wit and humorous stories soon put her comfortably into their family. They were even able to discuss past practical jokes without causing her to feel embarrassed by her own experience.

The formal dinner was really awful, but it barely beat out the flamingoes as being the worst. Vicki shook her golden head ruefully. "Did Adam tell you about that one?"

"No. I'm afraid we haven't had much of an opportunity to discuss that part of his life." Kelly was able to smile as she answered. It was a lot easier to forgive the joke now as she sat in Vicki's huge but friendly home with Adam holding her hand affectionately.

"Well, I have this large fish pond in the backyard that has a little rock fountain and lily pads floating around." Vicki began her reminiscence. "I spent a lot of money, more than I should have, on landscaping it and stocking it with fancy Japanese goldfish. Artistically I placed two beautiful, realistic looking Fiberglas flamingoes at the edge of the water gazing down at the fish. One day I glanced out my back window and I saw one of the birds move. I thought I had lost my mind. I looked closer and saw that instead of two birds, there were four. The next day there were six, and the next day there were eight, and they kept multiplying until there were over two dozen flamingos crowded wing-to-wing wading in my fish pond, which suddenly seemed much smaller, dining on my goldfish and making the water filthy. I thought maybe it was the mating season or something and my Fiberglas birds had acted like decoys, drawing the others in to nest. But it seems that

my sweet brother had been bringing a new pair of birds in every night. And I never suspected a thing until I caught him red—or rather pink-handed.

"Honestly, I didn't know they would ever fly," he said in an effort to defend himself. "And I need to get rid of the flamingos after the joke was over."

"Sure you need. But every year at mating season they all come back. They must have some homing pigeon blood in them because even though I like my Fiberglas birds, the real ones still manage to find my little pond." As much as she grumbled, it was evident that Vicki was not too upset about the matter. "Actually, it's kind of fun watching the baby birds hatch and grow up. There're some that are about half grown living out there now. Remind me tomorrow when I show you around, and I'll arrange to take you out to see them," she told Kelly.

"I hate to leave good company, but I'm going to go take a shower," Adam said as he pushed away from the table.

"Good. I thought you'd never leave," Vicki announced cheerfully. "There's quite a lot more I want to tell Kelly about you before she gets too involved."

Adam stood behind Kelly's chair and wrapped his arms around her shoulders. "Don't believe even a word she says," he cautioned in a stage whisper. "You know what a liar she is." Then he moved his head around until his mouth captured hers in a quick kiss. "I'll sure be glad when you learn how to whistle," he murmured in her ear before leaving the room.

"I wanted to tell you how sorry I was that you were hurt by my little scheme," Vicki said with un-

Jo n a.t sincerity after the two women were alone I guess I don t think beyond my own plans for revenge I never considered that I was wrongfully taking up your time But —she brightened as she added— it turned out okay, didn t it? Although I must admit that you had me a little concerned when you showed up tonight looking a lot less wholesome than I had remembered For a minute I thought my joke had backfired royally"

Kelly laughed along with her, knowing that even though she had wiped off quite a bit of makeup in the car she must have still presented quite a picture "It took me awhile but I can see now that you weren t trying to make fun of me and my work Adam keeps telling me that I have to stop being so serious And when I m with him I find myself really enjoying even the smallest things

"You love him very much, don t you?" Vicki gently prompted, trying to satisfy her sisterly concern

"Yes, I do He s pretty terrific I don t feel like I m really alive unless I m with him" Kelly confided softly

"And I know for a fact that he feels the same way about you I ve never seen him act this way about any other woman I had almost given up hope of ever becoming an aunt"

I think that s rushing things a little too much We ve never talked about love or marriage or anything like that In fact, we re overdue for a good long talk along those lines"

"I know it s hard to believe, but Adam is a little shy He s always been hesitant about letting someone know he loves them because he s afraid of being

rejected."

"He doesn't have to worry about that from me. As far as he's concerned, I'm just a girl who can't say no," Kelly joked, but her feelings were serious.

"I think you should let him know. And soon. He's not getting any younger, you know," Vicki couldn't resist adding as she stood up and started to clear the table.

Kelly helped her carry the dishes to the sink.

"I know this is a little awkward, but I need to ask if you want a separate bedroom, or do you two—" Vicki hesitated, unsure of how to delicately phrase the rest of her question without sounding too nosy.

"I'm not sure," Kelly answered, a sudden twinkle in her golden eyes. "Do you have a trench-coat I could borrow?"

"Sure, I think so. But why?"

"It's time I showed Adam that I can be as imaginative as he is."

Curious, but sensing that there was the potential for a good joke, Vicki found a trench coat and showed Kelly the room Adam always used, and in whose adjoining bath he was now taking his shower.

Several minutes later Kelly emerged from the hall bath, the trench coat tightly belted around her small waist and a smile twitching at the corners of her mouth. Letting herself into Adam's room, she tried to forget her own natural shyness as she heard the bathroom door open and saw his magnificent masculine form enter the bedroom.

"Kelly! What are you doing here?"

"I've come for my whistling lesson," she whispered

simply. The flames of desire leaping to life as she looked into his intense blue eyes. Fresh from his shower, his body had an almost primitive golden tan against the pale blue towel that was wrapped around his hips. Never had he looked more breathtakingly handsome, and never had she wanted him more.

He walked up to her and, cradling her face between his two large hands, waited to receive his kiss. It came at first, the pressure of his lips increased along with his passion as she answered his kiss with eager abandon.

"Oh darling, it seems like I've been waiting for this forever," he murmured huskily, covering her face with an ardent kisses. Kelly let her head fall back so his warm lips could follow the trail of her jawline and continue down her neck. Stopping when he touched the rough barrier of the coat, he realized he had been so pleasantly surprised to see her that he hadn't noticed what she was wearing. "Are you expecting rain?" he asked.

"Of course not, silly. All detectives are supposed to wear trench coats." Taking her time and smiling up at him seductively, she unfastened the belt. "Would you like to help me with this?"

His hands pulled back the wide lapels, preparing to slide the coat off her shoulders but then froze at the sight of her creamy bare skin. He realized that beneath the coarse tan material she was totally nude. "Humphrey Bogart never looked like this," he said approvingly as she got out of the coat, letting it fall to the floor. "You were wrong about there being no difference between female and male detectives." He

smiled at her with an intimate tenderness. Sweeping her into his arms, he carried her to the bed, where he gently deposited her.

Kelly's hand stroked the dark, silken path of hair that ran from his chest and down the center of his flat abdomen. She could feel his muscles tighten beneath her fingertips as she reached the towel. Hooking one finger into the terry cloth, she paused watching as it fell away from his body. "And I've been dying to see again what you've been hiding behind that towel," she teased provocatively.

Adam made a low sound deep in his throat as he lowered himself over her beautiful body. "I'll never accuse you of lacking imagination, you little minx."

This moment had been building too long for either to be able to hold anything back. They came together with the perfect harmony of longtime lovers moving to the carnal rhythm of their pounding heartbeats. Kelly was astonished by the intensity of feeling that spread through her. Adam's voice and hands caressed her, pushing her to even greater heights until, with a pleasure close to pain, she arched against him, accepting his gift of love.

They lay together in each other's arms, their passions momentarily satisfied, but their desire for each other still running at a fever pitch. She felt his hand stroking her hair and the soft whisper of his breath against her neck with a magnified joy.

"You've earned your ears," Adam said gently when his breathing had slowed to normal. He moved so that he could look down at her face.

"My what?" she asked, her voice still husky.

"Your Mickey Mouse ears. Only good girls and boys earn their ears, and you were very, very good," he said, his lopsided grin stretching across his face as he complimented her.

"At least I can still say I have never made love with a married man."

"Or I with a married woman. But we can change that. How about next week?"

"You want me to have an affair with a married man next week?" she teased, suspecting his meaning but wanting to hear him spell it out.

"Yes, with your husband," he whispered, bending to kiss her irresistible lips.

"Is this a proposal or a proposition?"

"Both. At least you know I'll never step out of line being married to my own private eye," he said as he chuckled, waiting anxiously for her answer.

"But do you realize that this will mean that Vicki won the joke contest?"

"I concede defeat. A man in love is an easy target. Besides, I'll be too busy starting my own little Mouseketeer to be thinking up new jokes for a while."

"Then, all jokes aside, this woman, who loves you very much, would be honored to become your wife," Kelly replied adoringly. "Now kissmmee!"

He complied ecstatically, but quickly his kisses began to deepen as the flames of their passion began to be rekindled. "Kelly McClain, soon to be Davis, I love you more than even my fertile imagination would have envisioned."

"Whistle, whistle!" she replied affectionately.

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A Private Affair

Kathy Clark

As a private investigator, Kelly knew how much secret passions could tell about a person. But she understood her own passions not nearly as well. Hot on the trail of a philandering husband, the kind of man she had no use for, Kelly found herself growing more than professionally intrigued by Adam. If he was really the cheat his wife suspected, why weren't there any clues? Even worse, his dark good looks and commanding ways were arousing emotions in her that she had thought were under control. Rule number one was never get involved with a married man. Rule number two was never get involved with a suspect. Kelly was about to break all the rules!

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